



## Q3 Executive Director's Report

### GENERAL COMMENTS

FST settled into a pandemic rhythm during the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter. Strategy Team decided early on not to begin bringing staff back in the fall, given our virtual service delivery capacity and continuing uncertainty regarding the course of the pandemic. Sadly, this turned out to be a good decision. Strategy Team met with all staff through a series of virtual “road shows” to brief staff on a number of significant shifts in the organization including the consolidation of the 2 and 3 floor office usage at Church and potential funding constraints. FST received a number of positive grant notices including a significant 3-year grant to build lived expertise engagement in Campaign 2000 work and a Social Sciences and Health Research Canada (SSHRC) grant for a nation-wide project to deepen the work and knowledge needed to more effectively support women with intellectual/developmental disabilities who have experienced sexual violence.

### COMMUNITY PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

#### Changing Lives Family Violence

In the fall, the Province announced 13 new Ontario Health Teams. Family Service Toronto has officially signed on to participate as engaged partners with both the Downtown East Toronto Ontario Health Team and the Mid West Ontario Health Team. The Downtown East OHT has identified people with mental health counselling and psychotherapy needs as a priority population for the first year of the OHT. A mental health working group has been formed and is looking at various models for organizing an environmental scan. Plans are also being made to conduct surveys with social service providers, physicians and clients to ensure their voices and needs are heard in the planning process. FST is well positioned to work with this group, given our strong mental health and counselling programs.

Staff in CLFV continue to offer counselling supports, group work and community programming from home. Teams have been endlessly creative in thinking about programming. They have tried out various programs and adjusted them on the fly. This has meant living with a lot of change and, at times, ambiguity. It has been incredible to see the ideas they come forward with. Managers have also worked tirelessly to support teams and to think strategically about how to support staff and our clients.

#### Violence Against Women (VAW)

During this quarter, the Violence Against Women team provided ongoing support to an increasing number of women who have experienced violence/ abuse and reached out to FST for services. The team served clients over the phone and engaged in Zoom counselling with clients when deemed safe and appropriate. VAW staff continue to find creative ways to reach isolated clients. In addition to a recurring weekly webinar to promote mindfulness and positive coping strategies, the team facilitated an Expressive Arts counselling group. In the group, participants used creative strategies to express themselves and learn positive coping strategies. Ongoing educational and prevention programming on Tamil radio stations was also provided. The VAW team's pilot project with the Assaulted Women's Helpline and the Red Door Family Shelter, where VAW counsellors provide support to women who are

in living in high-risk situations or have recently fled abuse, is ongoing with referrals increasing dramatically. Through a VAW pilot law project, team members gained valuable information on pertinent topics such as choosing the right attorney and how-to best access and use legal supports.

### **Community Engagement**

No report.

### **Seniors and Caregivers Support Services**

During this period, the Seniors and Caregivers Support Service (SCSS) team's work focused on meeting the needs of Toronto seniors and caregivers, many of whom continue to experience isolation due to COVID-19. In collaboration with the Coordinator of Volunteer Resources, the SCSS team continued the Friendly Phone Chat program, where volunteers provide a weekly friendly call to check-in with FST clients. Eleven volunteers made 202 calls to 26 clients over 3 months. SCSS team members provide ongoing volunteer support. The team also provides a biweekly group open to community members called the Seniors Bi-Weekly Group Chat. The group provides seniors a place to connect, talk about their experiences and learn ways to manage their stress and anxiety. In November, the SCSS team started a group for caregivers called the Caring for the Caregiver group. In the group, participants choose topics for discussion and provide mutual support. SCSS team members also continue to hold Zoom groups and individual sessions for clients. Additionally, team members participated on the Scarborough Elder Abuse Network, the FST run Elder Abuse Consultation Team and provided consultation to other senior supporting organizations in the community.

### **David Kelley Services**

David Kelly Services continues to see clients virtually for both group and individual work. The Eco Therapy Group has struggled to find its place during virtual work as it relies heavily on being in nature-based settings and engaging with the community in person. The Emotional Skills Group has continued to grow and is well received by the community. The team is working on two new groups; one to combat social isolation and another narrative therapy group focused on working with clients who are experiencing emotional challenges grounded in their identity.

### **Counselling Services**

The virtual walk-in is on track offering faster access to counselling for community members. The counselling team continues to do individual and group work virtually, with the counselling Emotional Skills Group growing significantly in the last six months.

A trend of families seeking support has emerged. Staff are working more with family therapy models. Anecdotal evidence suggests that as families spend large amounts of time with one another due to the pandemic, they need more support to navigate difficult interpersonal challenges.

During Q3, the Service Access Unit touched the lives of 5,465 individuals, through phone contact, over email and by texting. Immediate service and personalized solutions were provided and included booking clients into: virtual single sessions or one of the many groups and workshops offered by FST. Client referrals over the holiday period to other community services included agencies that provided support around food, clothing and holiday hampers.

We have strengthened our relationship with the Assaulted Women's Help Line and we are working together to facilitate referrals to a new project being offered by the VAW program. We have brushed up on texting skills, TTY and LOL as we begin to register younger participants for the Queer and Connected group programs.

## **Families in Transition**

We continue to see clients virtually, providing workshops and individual work with both children and adults. We're in the process of creating multiple workshops with the goal of offering community members a larger variety of FIT services. Many FIT clients are motivated by external family and legal factors in seeking service. The goal in offering a wider variety of applicable services is to impart skills and knowledge onto community members in a format other than therapy/counselling. The team has proposed to engage clients in the development of these workshops to ensure service users have input. FIT continues to offer parenting during COVID drop-in support groups.

## **Social Action**

The main focus for this quarter was on the Campaign 2000 report cards. This year, 9 report cards were released including one in the Northwest Territories for the first time. The most significant findings were the increase in rates of child poverty in several provinces and territories across the country and the marginal decline in child poverty by less than half a percentage point over between 2017-2018. Partners reported that it was difficult to get media attention on the report card releases due to the focus on the pandemic and the initial vaccine announcement from the federal government that coincided with the report card release date. The report card was shared broadly with all MPs, Senators, Campaign 2000s national network, and over our social media channels.

Campaign 2000s advocacy and lobbying resulted in a significant win in the federal fall economic update. There was a pandemic pay increase to the Canada Child Benefit for families with eligible children under six. We continue to work to ensure universal access to the CCB as well as more income security supports for families in need. To that effect, the Ontario Campaign 2000 submitted a brief to the provincial budget process this quarter.

We continued leading the CERB Repayment Amnesty Campaign with partners from across the country. This work has received much attention from elected officials and media. Leila provided an interview on CBC Radio's The Current, as well as several other local and national media outlets as did campaign partners.

Social Action work included organizing a meeting with senior officials from CMHC and the Community Housing Transformation Centre and 50 women's serving and housing organizations and women/gender nonconforming people with lived expertise of poverty and homelessness to discuss how the government will follow through on their Gender Based commitments from the National Housing Strategy through the \$1B Rapid Housing Initiative that was announced as part of the suite of pandemic emergency measures. In Toronto, Leila and Chris worked with senior city staff and community members/organizations supporting people living in encampments to have exploratory conversations to see if the two groups could develop an agreement and mandate for a potential Table, the goal of which would be to provide some form of coordinated support to encampment residents.

## **Building Inclusive Communities**

### **Options**

Options staff have started to participate in a monthly sessional with Dr. Bradley, who is a Psychiatrist that specializes in Dual Diagnosis. Both the children and the adult teams have started the task of

creating Program Guidelines. It is an exciting project as it will streamline the support being provided to clients and families and support in training new staff who start in the programs.

The UW project - Carry on (line), Stay Calm and Connected – has taken off and the interest is high. Staff is facilitating two Parent Peer groups each week, as well as facilitating monthly psycho-educational sessions. Starting in January, we will be launching two more peer support groups for adults with Developmental Disabilities, which are both already full. The next steps will be to fill the Peer Facilitator roles for all the groups. These groups join the Advocates for a Better Future and Best Buddies projects that are already on the go.

### **Passport**

The Passport team continues to work from home and connect with clients and their caregivers. We also continue to fund new clients and have approved 107 people during this period. The following is a breakdown of voice mail messages left for the team from October to December:

October 2020: 1843

November 2020: 1394

December 2020: 954

The team participated in training related to a new Ministry Database called DSCIS (Developmental Services Consolidated Information System) to be used to house the non-financial information of Passport clients. This system went live on November 30, 2020 and the team is now utilizing this along with CRM.

### **PassportONE**

In partnership with MCCSS, the PassportONE data team has successfully launched the integration of the DSCIS and CRM programs in November. With the integration DSO information can now be imported into the CRM data to provide updates on client records and decrease duplication when it comes to mapping of new recipients. The PassportONE team also successfully designed and implemented the changes required to implement the new PSW Wage Enhancement initiative being launched by the provincial government and is working at adapting the system to incorporate recommendations made the Auditor General of Ontario.

Lastly, the PassportONE team and York Support Services Network partnered last summer to develop a fillable pdf for recipients to submit claims to PassportONE for reimbursement. This platform was launched in the fall and will cut down on the number of manual data entry required by PassportONE claims staff. We will be monitoring usage throughout the upcoming months and promoting the fillable for year-end submissions.

## **Knowledge Building**

### **Evaluation**

- Next steps were discussed for implementation during and post pandemic of the report “What we have learned about FST’s resilience work and our clients’ resilience.”
- Evaluation or tracking tools were developed for five FST projects.

### **Research**

- FST continues to be involved in COVID-19 related studies in the sector: a needs assessment for people with developmental disabilities (PwDD) and their care givers; a city-wide, multisector study on the effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic Response for People who are Marginalized (MARCO).

- A literature review to explore the impact of COVID-19 on people experiencing intimate partner violence; possible implications for the VAW program will be shared for program planning purposes.
- An IRCC funded study to examine the impact of the Healthy Families Healthy Communities program on participants and the community has been completed. Submission of the report to the Ministry of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) is pending.

**Knowledge Dissemination**

Results on the needs assessment for PwDD and their caregivers was presented at 7th Biennial Conference on Developmental Disabilities in BC; these results were also shared in an Ontario Public Service Forum on the sector for MCCSS.

**Grant Submissions and Contributions**

We continuing to track a very higher number of funding opportunities for pandemic emergency needs, pandemic-related research as well as Black Lives Matter. Major projects in the pipeline now have a combined total of \$2.8M.

**Students**

Two students completed their placements in December and early January. Meanwhile, the planning cycle for 2021-2022 academic placements will start soon.

**Strategic Work**

Operational planning for the 2021-2022 implementation of the Strategic Plan 2021-26: Open Hearts, Healthy Minds, Strong Communities continued through Q3.

**Reporting**

Knowledge Building led two virtual group sessions with parents and caregivers and spoke with individual clients as part of a consultation process with Options and Passport clients; findings will be used to inform discussions with MCCSS.

**ORGANIZATIONAL RESOURCES**

**Technology, Communications, Facilities**

With continuing office closures and pandemic-related restrictions, our technology efforts continued to focus on supporting staff working remotely from home. This required the purchase and deployment of additional laptops for new staff and weekly onsite support at Church Street for resolving hardware issues as well as daily remote support. In December, we configured and deployed an additional device to provide redundancy for our virtual private network and purchased additional licences to provide up to 175 concurrent users on our network. The department also welcomed the arrival of an IT project manager on a one-year contract following an intensive recruitment process. The project manager is working with the internal steering team overseeing the search and deployment of a new Electronic Client Records System later this year.

The department continued to work with the Executive Director on activities relating to use of space at 355 Church and the leasing and design of additional space at Sterling Road (Suite 100) to meet the growing needs of PassportONE. Renovations to the suite were completed over the Fall with the setup of new furniture and workstations completed by late December. Two tenants began renting space on the second floor at Church Street by October and the search for additional tenants was underway.

The department continued work with the Employee Engagement Work Group on development of a collaborative channel for internal communications and managed key messaging for external communications relating to FST’s pandemic response through the fall. The department assisted

Campaign 2000 staff on cover design and posting of the annual national poverty report card and provincial report cards. The department also played a key role in co-ordinating our virtual United Way staff campaign which exceeded its \$25,000 target and raised more than \$30,000.

**Finance**

No report.

**Human Resources and Volunteers**

During this period HR continue to recruit, onboard and support new employees safely into the organization during the pandemic; assess HRIS system – identify our needs and ways to improve system; and complete 2020 closing reconciliations for payroll and benefits. As part of its communication plan, Volunteer Resources developed and distributed an e-newsletter to FST volunteers to share information with them and increase their engagement.