



Sinneave
FAMILY FOUNDATION

**2019
IMPACT
REPORT**

CREATING OPPORTUNITIES
UNLOCKING POTENTIAL
SHAPING THE FUTURE



Tanya McLeod
President

President's Message

The Sinneave Family Foundation (Sinneave) remains committed to its bold agenda to deliver outcomes in Education, Employment and Supported Independent Living for people on the autism spectrum. We track indicators in relation to the quality and impact of services and are developing an evidence-base to inform decisions and systems change efforts. In 2019, Sinneave continued to work with others to create opportunities and shape a future where autistic Canadians unlock their potential and lead fulfilled lives.

I am pleased to share this Impact Report featuring highlights from our work in 2019 that illustrate results produced in each of our three outcome areas and how we are gaining momentum on our broad agenda. My sincere thanks to our volunteer Board of Directors, our passionate staff and the many partners and collaborators with whom we are collectively making a difference.

Who We Are

Sinneave is a charitable operating foundation, created in 2008 to address the challenges experienced by emerging adults on the autism spectrum. Our vision is to improve the quality of life for autistic adults by supporting the transition to adulthood.

We recognize that our society is diverse in many ways. The term 'neurodiversity' describes a range of differences in individual brain function and behavioral traits. Autism is one form of neurodiversity.

We believe that autistic individuals bring unique talents and important perspectives to our homes, schools, workplaces and communities.

We imagine a world where neuro-diverse and autistic individuals live, learn, work and thrive as valued and contributing members of our communities.

A NOTE ON AUTISM LANGUAGE

There are varied preferences in the autism community regarding the use of 'person first' language as compared to 'identity first' language. Sinneave acknowledges that language evolves and preferences are personal, and we aim to be inclusive of all stakeholders. For the purpose of this Impact Report, we have included both identity first (autistic) and person first (individual or person with autism) language, and we hope that our broad audience sees themselves in our work.

What We Believe

There is a window of time during early childhood when formal supports improve outcomes during the school years for autistic children. As these children transition to adulthood, the formal supports they previously received begin to fade or disappear entirely.

We believe another important window of time is during the transition to adulthood. When this period of time goes well, the lives of individuals on the autism spectrum and their families are positively impacted over the long term.

While it is never too late to create a plan for adulthood, early planning facilitates the many steps, and allows time for potential detours, on the path to reaching adult goals.

Success is supported when autistic adolescents are engaged as active participants in planning for their adult future.

What We Do

Our doors at The Ability Hub are open to anyone who is looking to understand the autism landscape. We support individuals, parents and professionals through our Resource Centre, and offer accurate, reliable information and navigation to a variety of local resources.

Our direct services and workshops offer autistic adolescents, adults and their families various opportunities to learn, set goals and build the skills needed to thrive in adulthood. We develop, test and evaluate new approaches to goal driven skill development.

We also work in the community and build strong relationships with industry, education and government leaders to reduce barriers and create opportunities for autistic adults to unlock their potential.

While there are many possible measures of success, we focus on improving 3 key adult outcomes: Education Beyond High School, Employment, and Supported Independent Living.



The Sinneave Family Foundation Team

The Sinneave team values high quality work in an environment of collaboration, innovation, respect and diversity - including neurodiversity. We aspire to become a leader as an inclusive employer, social innovator, valued community partner and systems influencer. In 2019, we began taking a more purposeful and engaged approach to diversity and inclusion in our organization. We look forward to sharing what we are learning in 2020.

How We Think About IMPACT

Impact across the lifespan is a long game and requires patience, perseverance and unwavering commitment. It also requires accountability for outcomes. In addition to measuring outcomes in Education beyond High School, Employment and Supported Independent Living, we also measure signs of progress at the individual and family, community, and system change levels. These indicators give us confidence that **we are on the right track to longer-term impact.**

It takes collective action, in which individuals and organizations work together, to achieve sustainable impact at scale. We work collaboratively with many individuals, families and agencies to align our efforts, support one another, address gaps and reduce redundancy while advancing our shared goal of improving quality of life for autistic adults.

We define IMPACT as the subjective and objective positive change in an individual, their family and the interconnected systems that surround them that help an autistic individual to reach their highest quality of life as an adult.



Creating Opportunities Through Systems Change

As an autistic individual approaches adulthood, they need a plan, skills, and opportunities to be successful. In the absence of community based opportunities such as available jobs, education supports or affordable housing, we cannot meaningfully improve outcomes in these key focus areas. That is why, in addition to the important work we do with individuals and families, we actively work with community and system leaders in education, employment and housing to help facilitate opportunities for autistic adults.

Social policy can also create opportunities. We work with policy makers locally, provincially and nationally to advance social policies that improve the lives of autistic adults. We call the work we do in the community and with policy makers **systems change**. Some of our system change efforts have resulted in a growing number of employers who are hiring autistic employees, and adults who are now connected to innovative affordable housing solutions.



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Planning and skills need to line up with opportunities for autistic individuals’ goals to be achieved.

- President, The Sinneave Family Foundation

The following pages share highlights from 2019 that exemplify opportunities Sinneave has created to unlock both individual and system potential and help shape the future.



Supporting Continued Growth & Education

Many autistic students have the potential and desire to attend post-secondary education, yet both enrolment and completion rates are considerably lower than in the general student population. Sinneave aims to support the transition to and from post-secondary settings by working at the individual and at the system level to foster student, faculty and staff success.

Connor's Story

In 2019, Connor enrolled in Sinneave's Launch + Skills program after finishing high school. With some brief work experience at an accounting firm, Connor knew he wanted to continue his education, improve his social skills and enhance his employability skills.

The customized plan and one-to-one coaching he received in the Launch + Skills program helped him work on these skill areas to support his success.

In the summer of 2019, Connor also participated in Sinneave's Excel Campus Prep program to help prepare for his transition to university. Connor is a first year Education student at Mount Royal University, and he has had many successes so far including keeping his course average above 85%, meeting new people, making friends on campus, and overall having a fun and very rewarding post-secondary experience.



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My biggest success so far in school has been settling in. It might not sound like much, but sometimes the little wins can be huge!

Program & Partnership Development

Sinneave developed the **Excel Campus Prep** program to assist aspiring post-secondary students to prepare for the step beyond high school. During the summer of 2019, 27 individuals participated in a 5-day course to learn about things such as managing academic schedules, accessing peer supports and learning services, and navigating campus life. Throughout 2019, Sinneave also engaged with post-secondary institutions in Calgary to encourage them to consider neurodiversity in their academic and non-academic priorities and strategies with the goal of creating more inclusive and innovative campus communities.

In collaboration with community partners, Sinneave helped 47 individuals continue their education beyond high school.

2019 SHARED OUTCOMES

47

Individuals
Returned to
School

Improving Employment Outcomes

The 2017 Canadian Survey on Disability reported the national employment rate for individuals on the autism spectrum aged 15-64 to be 24.5%, representing the lowest employment rate across all disability populations. Sinneave is committed to improving employment outcomes for this untapped workforce and to raising awareness about the benefits of inclusive workplaces. Governments, not-for-profit organizations and employers are coming together to create policy initiatives and develop targeted programs that offer solutions to the complex problem of under-employment.



Victoria's Story

Victoria enrolled in Launch + Skills in 2019 to explore work experience opportunities and potential career paths. During the program, Victoria's personal drive and commitment helped her achieve her employment goals and set a new goal of building confidence to advocate for herself. The skills she gained through previous employment, job sampling during the program, and community supports enabled her to secure employment as a retail associate.

Victoria has made impressive strides in her professional development and in creating social and recreational opportunities for herself. During her time as a Launch + Skills participant, she grew her social circle in ways that add meaning to her life and she has since become an active volunteer in the community.

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I would say the most impactful thing has been working with my skills coach and reframing how I make and maintain mutually beneficial relationships with other people.

National Program & Partnership Development

Sinneave commenced a 3-year, national project in 2019 to deliver our proven **EmploymentWorks** program together with 9 partner organizations in 19 locations across Canada. We are pleased to report that post-program employment rates in 2019 were nearly double the national average.

This project has also engaged over 116 businesses across Canada to provide inclusive job sampling opportunities for autistic adults. The Hyatt Regency Calgary, one of Sinneave's valued community partners is leading the way in inclusive workplace practices. We collaborated to create opportunities to sample jobs at the hotel via the RiseHY initiative, and many autistic individuals were subsequently hired through competitive processes.

120

Individuals
Employed

2019 SHARED OUTCOMES

With our partners in the EmploymentWorks project, Spectrum Advantage (Autism Calgary) and auticon (formerly Meticulon), we have helped 120 individuals secure employment.

Creating Opportunities to Live & Thrive in the Community

Many individuals with autism continue to live with their parents well into adulthood and middle age, and rely on their immediate family as their support system. Early planning and support can help to improve the odds that an autistic adult will continue to thrive while living as autonomously as possible in the community. Sinneave is committed to creating supported independent living opportunities by working with families, community supports and housing providers to develop innovative, affordable solutions.

SUPPORTED INDEPENDENT LIVING

Evan's Story

Evan is an autistic adult who recently graduated from Mount Royal University with a Bachelor's of Arts Degree in History and a minor in Geography. He enrolled in Sinneave's Launch + Skills program in January of 2019 with a goal of moving into his own apartment and building his social network. His team of transition specialists and skills coaches worked with him to set goals and helped him to build the skills he needed to be successful. With his coaches' support, he researched places to live and developed the skills he needed to live on his own and be a good roommate.

Evan is now living in an apartment, he has a roommate, and he has a full-time job that is related to his field of study. The friends Evan made in the program have become part of his peer group.



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Honestly, having a fire under me is a useful force for making me actually do things. So it's been a big help when it comes to getting me cooking for myself and actually taking care of an apartment.

Collaborative Initiatives Leading To Innovative Solutions

There is a growing need for safe, supported and affordable housing for autistic adults. Individual and family readiness is key to success in transitioning from the family home to an independent living situation. In 2019, Sinneave actively worked with individuals and families on readiness while collaborating with support agencies and community leaders in affordable housing to help identify and unlock innovative solutions. Sinneave also proudly responded to Autism Alberta's 2019 call to action by spearheading the formation of a provincial working group on Housing and Independent Living to shape the future and create more opportunities in Alberta.

Sinneave created opportunities for independent living for 24 individuals in affordable housing with supports.

2019 SHARED OUTCOMES

24

Individuals Living Independently with Support

Policy Development & Systems Change

By driving meaningful change at the policy level, Sinneave can create opportunities and reduce barriers for autistic adolescents and adults in our communities.

In 2019, we fostered Provincial and National policy by:

Contributing to the development of a blueprint for a National Autism Strategy as a member of the Canadian Autism Spectrum Disorder Alliance Board of Directors.

Capturing, reporting and sharing national data related to employment and labour market participation via the EmploymentWorks project.



Co-hosting a discussion on “Opportunities and Policy Levers in Supported Independent Living in Alberta” with representatives of the University of Calgary, School of Public Policy.

Developing and producing policy briefs and published papers on the topics of Education, Employment, and Supported Independent Living for autistic adults.



Hosting provincial and federal elected officials and bureaucrats to invite collaboration and foster policy discussions.

Formally supporting the recommendations in the Senate report, “A Roadmap to a Stronger Charitable Sector”

Important National and Provincial Policy Milestones that occurred during 2019:

Prime Minister endorsed a
National Autism Strategy

Public Health Agency of Canada launched the **ASD Strategic Fund** and funded six innovative community-based projects

Minister of Community & Social Services hosted a **Disability Advisory Forum** to inform decisions about Persons with Developmental Disabilities program eligibility

Shaping the FUTURE



KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE



2019 SHARED OUTCOMES



Individuals
Returned to School



Individuals
Employed



Individuals
Living Independently
with Support

Working with Individuals & Families

880

Attendees at
Educational Workshops
& Hosted Events

63

New Enrollments in the
Launch + Skills Program

465

Skills Coaching Sessions
with Individuals

300+

Families who developed
Transition Plans via the
Launch Suite of Programs

27

Attendees in the Excel
Campus Prep Program

161

Participants Learning
& Engaging in
Community-Based
Job Sampling

Creating Opportunities in the Community

70

Local Community
Outreach Events
Attended

34

Presentations at
Conferences & Events

31

News Stories & Knowledge
Exchange Materials
Mobilized

6

Multi-Media
Productions Developed

3

Policy Briefs
Published

1

Peer Reviewed
Publication Distributed

Leveraging Technology to Expand Our Reach



26,168

Website
Visitors
(102,554 Page
Views)



2,096

Facebook
Followers
(147,344 Reach)



1,707

E-Newsletter
Subscribers
(Monthly Issues)



382

Twitter Followers
(131,122 Reach)



162

Registered
Users



5

New Online
Platforms
(3 websites,
1 webinar,
1 online learning)

921

Visits to our
Resource Centre by
Individuals, Families, &
Community Professionals

6,146

Hours of In-Kind Space
at The Ability Hub
Gifted to the
Autism Community

31,103

Individuals & Families
Reached through a
Combination of Online
and In-person Offerings

Improving the transition to adulthood for individuals with autism



Garry McCulloch, CIM
Board Chair

Board Chair Message

In 2019, it was my distinct pleasure to chair the Board of Directors of The Sinneave Family Foundation as we gained momentum in creating opportunities for autistic adults.

The journey continues in 2020. Sinneave will innovate new approaches to skill development, collaborate with the University of Calgary to enhance orientation activities for neurodivergent students, further develop partnerships with employers to promote inclusive workplace practices, and continue to work with community leaders to unlock affordable housing opportunities for autistic adults. We will work with others and utilize technology to make resources and tools that support successful transition to adulthood widely available.

We recognize the importance of autistic individuals, their families, our staff, community partners and governments who work together with us to improve outcomes in education, employment and supported independent living for autistic Canadians. Thank you to each of you for your roles and commitment to our shared impact.

2019 Board of Directors

We would like to acknowledge and express sincere appreciation to The Sinneave Family Foundation Board of Directors for their time, dedication, and wise counsel that underlie the achievements of this organization. Special recognition is extended to three Directors that retired from the Board in 2019: Catherine Best, Gayla Rogers and Edward Wooldridge. Thank you for your volunteer service and commitment to building a stronger community and improved quality of life for autistic individuals and their families.



Left to Right: Dawn Leonard Gaudreault, Ian Holloway, Tanya McLeod (President), Garry McCulloch (Board Chair), Roby Brar, William Karny, Rick Sinneave, Michael Lambert

Not pictured: Laurene Beloin, Catherine Best, Andrew Hakin, Adam McKnight, Rutger Niers, Gayla Rogers, Edward Wooldridge



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