



**FIRST
UNITED**

2021 Annual Report

October 1, 2020 – September 30, 2021



2021



Message from leadership



Perseverance is a word that we use a lot at First United. We see community members having to persevere day in and day out when facing extreme poverty. Waking up each day and facing systemic challenges like homelessness, marginalization, trauma, and an overdose crisis are hard enough, and then throw something like a global pandemic on top and...well, you know how the pandemic has gone.

It weighs on you. It's weighed on us, certainly, as an organization. But perseverance is finding the strength to keep going. Our strength comes from this community. Through the fiscal 20-21 year we continued to endure a global pandemic and with each new iteration of restrictions, recommendations, and variants we had to adjust to make sure we kept people safe. Our partners in public health, our incredible staff, and our supporters were all there to lend a hand and help when called on. With their help, we continued to provide life-saving and life-affirming services every day.

Behind the scenes, we pressed forward with one of the most significant projects in First United's history: the redevelopment of our site at 320 East Hastings.

Though we didn't publicly launch details of the project until November 2021, a tremendous amount of work took place in the lead up. Our staff, board, advisors, and partners pushed on with dogged determination through design choices, permit applications, community consultations, strategic and business planning, fundraising, and critical program shifts to maintain service levels during the transition years. All this, while still serving the increasing needs of our community. All this, while navigating a global pandemic. All this, because we know this community needs and deserves a space like we'll provide.

Perseverance is dedication. We are dedicated to helping build a neighbourhood where every person's worth is celebrated, and all people thrive. And we've been able to do that for nearly 140 years because people like you have walked along us in our journey to help us, our neighbours, and this community. We thank you for being a part of this important work with us.

The Rev. Dr. Carmen Lansdowne, Executive Director
Dr. Heather F. Clarke, Chair, Board of Directors

Vision Mission Values

Our vision is a neighbourhood where every person's worth is celebrated and all people thrive.

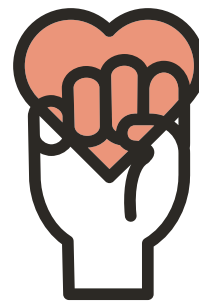
We seek a just society by nurturing each person's spirit through ministry, housing, advocacy, and community services.

Our values are acceptance, discernment, empathy, accountability, and social justice.



We are ON THE FRONTLINES

For nearly 140 years, **FIRST UNITED CHURCH COMMUNITY MINISTRY SOCIETY** has sought to build better futures in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside by providing essential services, community connection, and healing. Shoulder to shoulder with our community, we operate from a harm reduction perspective. As a faith-based service provider, we welcome and affirm every individual from all walks of life without exception. At our core is the mission, ministry, and call to social justice of the United Church of Canada.



FIRST UNITED Board of Directors 2020-2021

- | | |
|--|------------------------------|
| ▶ Dr. Heather F. Clarke , <i>Chair</i> | ▶ Elizabeth Kerklaan |
| ▶ The Rev. Dr. Brian Thorpe , <i>Vice-chair</i> | ▶ Kathy Kwon |
| ▶ Jean Budden , <i>Secretary</i> | ▶ Paul Mitchell-Banks |
| ▶ John Christie , <i>Treasurer</i> | ▶ Dave Munroe |
| ▶ Jacob Black-Lock | ▶ Laurie Schultz |
| ▶ The Rev. Jennifer Goddard-Sheppard | ▶ David Walkem |
| ▶ Scott Griffin | ▶ Aaron Wilson |
| ▶ Jeremy Hermanson | |

Non-voting board member:

Treena Duncan, *Executive Director, Pacific Mountain Region, the United Church of Canada*



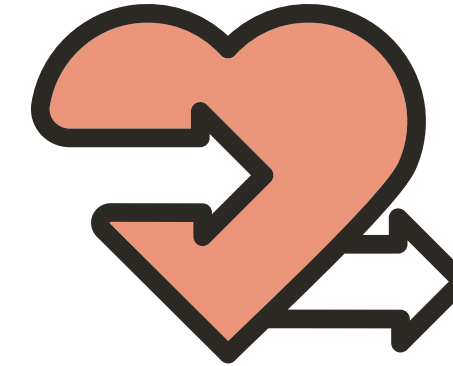
Leadership Team 2020-2021

- ▶ **The Rev. Dr. Carmen Lansdowne**, *Executive Director*
- ▶ **Gillian McLeod**, *Managing Director (through Oct 2021)*
- ▶ **Mayleen Ahoy**, *Director of Housing*
- ▶ **Dr. Cheryl Bear**, *Director of Community Ministry*
- ▶ **Amanda Burrows**, *Director of Development*
- ▶ **Keely Hale**, *Director of Programs*
- ▶ **Sean McCaughey**, *Director of Facilities (through May 2021)*
- ▶ **Rob Vandermey**, *Director of Finance and Administration*



Programs and Services

As the COVID-19 pandemic waged on through 2020 and 2021, we continued to provide essential services, community connection, and healing to thousands in the Downtown Eastside.



Food Security

When you think of a person's most basic needs, 'food' immediately comes to mind. Since the Great Depression we've ensured that those who come to our doors won't walk away hungry. In addition to three meals a day for our shelter residents, we also provide breakfast, lunch, and snacks to up to 200 community members every day. Our kitchen team cooks up hot, hearty meals that are filling, healthy, and delicious as part of this flagship program.



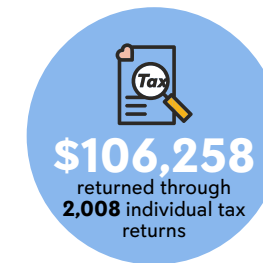
Community Help Desk

Transitioned to an outdoor service window during COVID-19, the community help desk is the heart of our frontline work. When community members visit the help desk, they can access essential items like socks, underwear, or toiletries. Or they can pick up their mail—including letters from family or important benefits cheques. They can also access harm reduction supplies that will keep them safer, healthy, or save their life. From crisis response to dignity and comfort, the community help desk is designed to help people with what they need, when they need it.



Shelter

We're proud to operate one of the most low-barrier shelters in the city, providing beds for up to 45 people each night. Our shelter is trans-inclusive, has a women-only space, and allows for well-behaved pets. Because we believe that nobody should be left out in the cold, we take a unique approach that other operators often aren't able to accommodate: we don't turn folks away who are actively using substances, we allow people to bring in their belongings, and they can stay for as long as they need while our case planner works with them to find a suitable long-term housing solution for them.



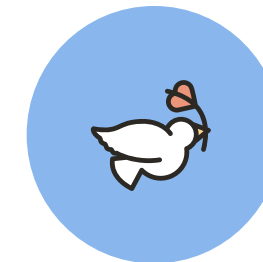
Taxes

For thousands in the Downtown Eastside community, the tax program can be transformational. For over 40 years, we've helped low-income individuals, families, and seniors file their taxes to ensure that they can access refunds and benefits that can be a lifeline. During the COVID-19 pandemic, many of our community members accessed CERB, which produced a host of new obstacles. This year, our tax team worked tirelessly to maximize returns and support individuals who may owe money back by connecting with social workers and engaging in ongoing education.



Legal Advocacy

Imagine having your existence criminalized. This is what our community members are up against every day. By providing legal advocacy we help community members fight unfair evictions, ensure individuals have access to social assistances they're entitled to like CPP and Disability claims, and provide information on a host of topics like family law, criminal law, immigration or human rights issues and more. Access to justice is essential to being able to thrive. During the pandemic when circumstances became even more precarious for marginalized populations, having legal support was even more crucial.



Spiritual Care

In this year we implemented an important shift in our community ministry: for the first time in our history, our ministry team is fully comprised of indigenous leaders. Culturally-safe and inclusive spiritual care is essential to serving the DTES, where up to 40% of the population identifies as indigenous. The increasing rates of confirmation of children's unmarked graves at residential schools since Summer 2021 reopened old wounds for many we serve. This deliberate shift in our ministry composition is part of how we are putting reconciliation into action, and how we will better serve and heal those who seek it.



RECONCILIATION IN ACTION



In May 2021, the unmarked graves of 215 children were found in Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc territory, at a former residential school. This was the beginning of confirmation of more unmarked graves across Canada. As a country, we could no longer hide from the atrocities that Indigenous people had known of and spoken about for years. As an organization that serves indigenous people, Indian Residential School survivors, and those suffering intergenerational trauma of Residential Schools, Indian Day Schools, the 60's scoop, and the ongoing over-representation of indigenous children in foster care, the news rapped our community. As part of the United Church of Canada, we also continue to reconcile our denomination's historic complicity in operating 15 residential schools.

For **FIRST UNITED**, we are committed to making reconciliation more than a buzzword. We continue to take clear action to pursue reconciliation with our community individually and organizationally. Our indigenous spiritual leadership Carmen Lansdowne (Heiltsuk First Nation), Cheryl Bear (Nadleh Whut'en

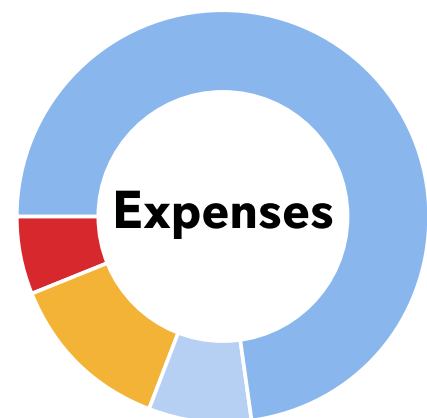
First Nation), and Lauren Sanders (Prairie Band Potawatomi and Kickapoo Nation of Kansas) wrote an op-ed in The Tyee calling on non-indigenous Canadians to join in sharing the grief and truth-telling of indigenous peoples. We now recognize September 30th, the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation as a statutory holiday and staff are encouraged to take the day to reflect and engage in their own acts of reconciliation. Our ministry team is entirely made up of indigenous women, in order to provide safe and culturally-informed spiritual healing to community members. The design of our new building has been fully informed by reconciliation as a design lens—it will provide over 100 units of affordable housing for indigenous people. We have also engaged indigenous consultants and firms wherever possible in order to support indigenous business.

Our work of reconciliation will never be over. It is a commitment that we have made as a community, and as an organization now and for our future. We invite you to join us in this work.

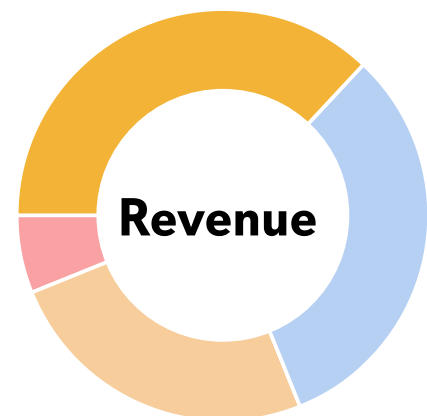




Audited Financial Statements



Charitable activities	\$ 3,189,849	73 %
Admin & facilities	\$ 375,012	8 %
Fundraising & Communications	\$ 578,125	13 %
Other	\$ 240,597	6 %
Total	\$4,383,585	100%



Government	\$ 1,740,454	37 %
Grants	\$ 1,506,990	32 %
Donations & Sponsorships	\$ 1,187,631	25 %
Other	\$ 266,256	6 %
Total	\$4,701,331	100%

Moving First Forward

Through 2020 and 2021, we amassed a team of advisors, experts, and leaders to help us navigate the complexities of redeveloping our aging building while simultaneously undertaking a \$30 million capital campaign to raise the necessary funds. Architects, designers, development managers, engineers, code consultants, lawyers, art and indigenous consultants, construction advisors, and community engagement specialists steered our staff through public hearings and city consultations with great success, and we're pleased to say the project received strong municipal and provincial endorsement.

With design development well underway, the First Forward Building Connections Campaign entered its quiet phase in February 2021. By the end of September, businesses, foundations, individuals, and Communities of Faith came together to collectively pledge nearly \$22 million to fund the redevelopment. This positioned us strongly for the launch of our public campaign in November.

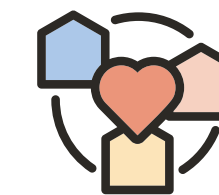
Staff and leadership worked diligently throughout the year to ensure successful relocation of programs, services, and administration to satellite locations throughout the Downtown Eastside where they will continue to operate from until the new facility opens in 2024. We remain committed to providing service to the community during the construction period and have found creative solutions to some challenges. The most noteworthy of these is continuing our Community Meals program through the FIRST UNITED Food Truck, to be launched in Spring 2022.





Thank you

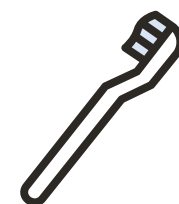
Serving thousands of individuals each year is possible because of the collective power of individuals, businesses, communities of faith, funders, and government partners who believe in our mission. It is because of their help that we are able to save lives, help people thrive, and pursue justice each day. Thank you to our donors, partners, and volunteers.



1,568
Donors



2,268
Financial Gifts



319
In-kind gifts



Frontline Monthly Donors

Our Frontline Monthly Donors provide the stable foundation we need to carry out our direct-service, boots-on-the-ground work every day. Their ongoing generosity allows us to meet the immediate needs of community members and take steps to make long-term, systemic changes to end the cycle of poverty. From \$5 a month up to \$500 a month, each Frontline Monthly Donor is an important part of ensuring First has a bright future.

378
Monthly
Donors

\$43
Average Gift
Amount



Friends of First

Our Friends of First are those who chose to make **FIRST UNITED** part of their legacy by leaving a gift in their will. These individuals have made the ultimate commitment to helping the Downtown Eastside community both in life and beyond their time. We are humbled by their commitment to our mission and to those we serve.

We're touched by the tribute gifts and bequests we received this year in memory of our loved ones. While saddened by the loss of important friends, we're proud to honour their memory and thank all who join us in that.

- ▶ Bill Booth & Tom Hutchinson
- ▶ Florence & Robert Brownridge
- ▶ Bob Burrows
- ▶ Dr. Heather F. Clarke
- ▶ Jan & Joan Drabek
- ▶ Colleen Dunn
- ▶ Don Evans
- ▶ Joan & Ken Fowler
- ▶ Doreen Gardner Brown
- ▶ Ian & Billie Housego
- ▶ Nancy Jefferson
- ▶ Sharon Johnson
- ▶ Barry LePatourel
- ▶ Jean & Lawrence Matrick
- ▶ Bob Miller & Barbara Rendell
- ▶ Janet Reid
- ▶ Rae Rennie
- ▶ Brian & Heather Smith
- ▶ Gordon & Daphne Squire
- ▶ Gordon H. Tolman
- ▶ Floyd C. Wartnow
- ▶ And 27 Anonymous Friends



To learn more about how you can include FIRST UNITED in your legacy, please contact donations@firstunited.ca.



Communities of Faith

Communities of Faith walk alongside us in our journey for healing, justice, and care. By supporting our programs and services as a congregation, our Communities of Faith leverage the power of collective action to affect great change.

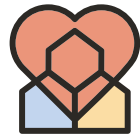
The Communities of Faith here are those who gave **\$5,000+** to our operations during the fiscal year.

We're honoured to acknowledge **FIRST FORWARD LEADERSHIP GIFTS** from the following Communities of Faith:

- ▶ Aldergrove United Church
- ▶ Canadian Memorial United Church
- ▶ Highlands United Church
- ▶ Ladner United Church
- ▶ Mt. Seymour United Church
- ▶ West Vancouver United Church Women

- ▶ Aldergrove United Church
- ▶ Gilmore Park United Church
- ▶ Pacific Mountain Regional Council
- ▶ Pacific Spirit United Church
- ▶ St. Andrew's Wesley United Church
- ▶ United Church of Canada

These lists represent gifts received up to September 30, 2021.



Community Partners

Community Partners are values-aligned businesses who have committed to giving back and helping their community. We're touched and honoured to have businesses from diverse industries who believe in our mission and have supported our annual Golf Tournament, Shelter Gala, Meal Program, and programs.



If you want more information about how your company can get involved through sponsorship or a corporate donation please contact us at donations@firstunited.ca.



Community Funders

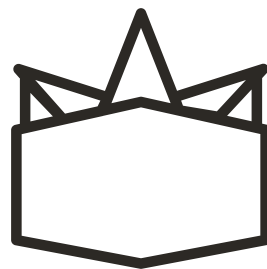
Our partners at foundations and within government are key to making our programs and services possible and achieving our vision of a neighbourhood where every person's worth is celebrated and all people thrive. Community Funders are essential to ensuring our neighbours in the Downtown Eastside are fed, sheltered, and safe.



Charles Johnson Charitable Fund | Hamber Foundation | Lotte and John Hecht Foundation | 1 Anonymous Funder



First Forward: Building Connections Campaign



We've launched an ambitious \$30 million capital campaign to redevelop our building at the corner of Gore and Hastings. A number of partners acted as early-adopters, helping us raise nearly \$22 million before going public. The First Forward: Building Connections Campaign publicly launched in November 2021.

First Forward Cabinet

We'd like to express our thanks to the members of the First Forward Cabinet for their support and leadership. Between our Cabinet and our Board of Directors, volunteer leadership contributed over \$1 million to move First Forward. **THANK YOU!**

- ▶ **Mike Harcourt**, *Honourary Chair*
- ▶ **Rudy Kerklaan**, *Co-Chair*
- ▶ **Rev. Cari Copeman-Haynes**, *Co-Chair*
- ▶ **Rev. Dr. Carmen Lansdowne**, *Executive Director*
- ▶ **Amanda Burrows**, *Director of Development and Campaign Director*
- ▶ **Dr. Heather F. Clarke**
- ▶ **Don Evans**
- ▶ **Jim Fletcher**
- ▶ **Mark Paetkau**
- ▶ **Randy Smallwood**
- ▶ **Rev. Nancy Talbot**
- ▶ **Nancy Trott**

