



EMPLOY *Abilities*

*Overcoming
Adversity*

2019-2020

ANNUAL REPORT



KEN SAUNDERS

Chair

The Chair's Annual Message

2019/ 2020 has evolved to be one of the most challenging periods in our agency's existence. The emergence of COVID-19 has created a number of hurdles for our staff, clients and board members and I am proud to say that we have all stepped up, both as individuals and as a team, to face this global threat. We are fortunate to have such a competent Executive Director who has taken charge in this area by coordinating our staff across the province, including locations in Cold Lake, Bonnyville, Lac La Biche, St. Albert, Hinton, St. Paul, Vegreville and our newest location, Grande Prairie. Providing these essential services to our clients during a pandemic is extremely difficult but also so important to their well-being.

In addition to our services, ensuring personal safety for everyone is also an important goal. The fact that our agency is able to complete this task is a commendation to the dedication they all have to our overall mission.

Additionally, our Board has also stepped up by moving our monthly meetings online without a summer break. This helps us ensure that we can continue to deliver our services to our client community that is faced with additional obstacles during these times.

On behalf of the entire Board of Directors, I applaud the work and dedication of the Executive Director and staff for all of their wonderful accomplishments. We look forward to additional growth in the near future.

Board of Directors 2019-2020



Board of Directors 2019-20 (From left to right)

Back row:

Dan Stannard, Ken Saunders, Andrea Szabo,
Sue McGregor, Lorenzo Pasutto, Simon Rowe

Front row:

Logan Sawchuk, Edgar Jackson, Ed Lavallee

Message from the Executive Director

The theme of this year's annual report is overcoming adversity. The clients that our staff support every day at EmployAbilities and the path they have taken to find employment inspire me. Some of the clients we have supported to find employment are overcoming huge barriers and obstacles. Overcoming adversity is a challenge for us all. The year 2020 will long be remembered as one of the most challenging years due to COVID-19. EmployAbilities has not been immune to the challenges faced by COVID-19. We have had to adjust our programs and services to meet the new demands of clients and employers. EmployAbilities is now meeting more clients virtually through video meeting programs, text, and video calls to allow Albertans the opportunity to receive services from EmployAbilities staff. Although COVID-19 has made it more challenging to find employment during this pandemic, EmployAbilities staff and clients continue to move forward, overcoming adversity and finding employment.

Even through these difficult times, EmployAbilities managed to secure two new programs: one, which started in April 2020 in Grande Prairie and the other, which started in June 2020 in Edmonton. EmployAbilities is excited to be offering a new program supporting Albertans with disabilities to find employment in Grande Prairie as well as a new program to support newcomers to Canada with disabilities with pre-employment services offered in Edmonton.

EmployAbilities will overcome adversity and continue to provide services and programs to individuals with disabilities and barriers to employment as it has done for the last 46 years.



JASON LOEWER
Executive Director

MISSION STATEMENT

To provide specialized services to individuals with disabilities or barriers to employment by creating opportunities for skill development, education and employment.

VISION

We envision an inclusive society where all people are valued, respected and have the opportunity to work to their full potential.

VALUES

We collaborate and innovate to provide inclusive services with compassion and integrity to all Albertans.

EMPLOY *Abilities*

Program Statistics July 1, 2019 - June 30, 2020

411 clients accepted into job placement services

300 clients placed into employment

217 clients still employed at 3 months

32 clients accepted into a 24-week training program

Audited financial statements for the fiscal year from July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020 are available by contacting Employabilities at 780-423-4106 or by emailing employ@employ-abilities.ab.ca.

CLIENT SATISFACTION SURVEY

94% of EmployAbilities' clients are satisfied or very satisfied with EmployAbilities' programs and services.

94% of EmployAbilities' clients indicated that they have seen improvement in their skills and abilities since attending EmployAbilities.

95% of EmployAbilities' clients would recommend EmployAbilities' services to friends and people they know.

What are clients saying about EmployAbilities?

"The program helped me a lot to build my confidence."

"The staff have been extremely helpful."

"EmployAbilities helped me feel less overwhelmed by the whole job search process."

"EmployAbilities have helped me to learn interviewing skills and how to make up resumes and cover letters."

"EmployAbilities helped me get my life together."

"I needed computer skills desperately and was able to achieve that skill."

"I learned what is realistic for my circumstances and you helped me get back on my feet. You are all awesome!"

Strive 4 Work

Strive 4 Work is an employment focused program consisting of 10 intakes, involving 8 weeks of classroom skills training and 10 weeks of work experience.

MarySol came to the Strive 4 Work program in St. Albert with a determination to succeed, a desire to help others, and an outgoing personality. MarySol also came with mental health struggles, family issues, an unstable living situation, and seizures. MarySol worked hard throughout the program and spent a great deal of time supporting the higher need participants. She helped create an environment where all the participants felt safe and welcome. On completion of the program, MarySol was able to obtain a position as a Personal Care Aide, which allowed her to use her strongest skills in relationship building and supporting others while earning a pay cheque. This job allowed MarySol to get her own living accommodations, be able to support herself financially, and have regular and consistent employment, which supported her mental health.

Strive 4 Work Program staff supported MarySol by helping her with updating her resume and writing cover letters as well as practicing and preparing for interviews. MarySol completed Intermediate Microsoft Office Skills, Standard First Aid/CPR Level C, Basics in Food Safety, WHMIS, and Service Best certifications while in the program. Program staff helped her acquire professional clothing for interviews and work. Program staff introduced MarySol to Brad Bartko, a motivational speaker and person with disabilities, who became MarySol's work experience supervisor and employer. Program staff has remained in regular contact with MarySol

**14 Clients
employed**

**40 Clients
Accepted**

MarySol STRIVE 4 WORK

throughout work experience and since her graduation from the program to follow up and offer assistance if any further supports are required.

MarySol encourages job seekers to "be present" through the process.

"If anyone is thinking that they're not making any progress, but they're showing up and practicing every day? You are, so do your future self a favor and work hard today, don't worry about tomorrow or what happened last week, be present," she says. "I find everything works itself out if you can at least focus on your feelings, your actions, and your own personal growth."

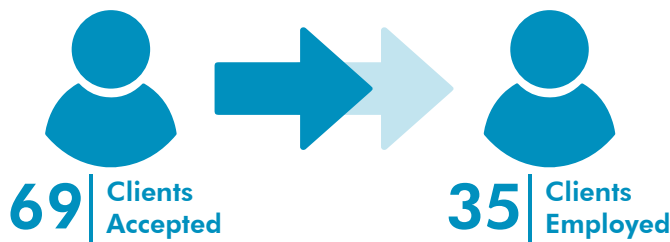




EMPLOYABILITIES NORTH

(Cold Lake, Bonnyville, St. Paul, Vegreville, & Lac La Biche)

A program providing skills training and employment supports to individuals with disabilities to assist in finding, obtaining, and retaining employment.



Share in the Success

Christopher was referred to EmployAbilities North in June 2019 by Alberta Supports; he had been on Income Support for some time. Chris came to EmployAbilities because he needed an updated resume and help with interview skills. There were also several workshops offered by EmployAbilities North that he found of benefit. Chris identified as having barriers including ODD, ADHD, Social Anxiety and PTSD.

Christopher EMPLOYABILITIES NORTH



He had tried many jobs but these barriers would always lead to a loss of employment. The Employment Facilitator set Chris up with the correct counseling, which he has been loyally attending for the last year. The Employment Facilitator also worked with Chris on life skills, dealing with stress and anxiety, and how to channel positivity. Chris was a good fit for the Customized Employment program. In August 2019, he began the process to become an entrepreneur and open his own tattoo studio. Chris got his keys for his tattoo studio in November 2019. He did renovations on the shop himself and opened Tranquil Ink Tattoos in Bonnyville on February 1, 2020. He was building up his clientele but had to close temporarily in March due to COVID-19 and social distancing regulations.

Chris used this time to take courses online to help hone his craft. He has also been learning how to run a business via online training and has been working closely with Community Futures and their business training programs. He has also been using social media to keep people interested in Tranquil Ink. Chris remodelled his shop to meet proper distancing protocols and took the COVID-19 training. His shop reopened in July 2020. He has caught up with the backlog of clients who had to be cancelled because of COVID-19 restrictions and is now accepting new clients daily. His use of social media has led to him having more clients now that he has re-opened. After re-opening, Chris wanted to give back to the community, so he did an acrylic painting to be auctioned off. The proceeds went the Bonnyville Food Bank.

"I am so grateful to everyone who has helped me," Chris says. "I appreciate it and I'm excited to be getting back to the work I love to do."



LAKELAND EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

(Cold Lake, Bonnyville & Lac La Biche)

Lakeland Employment Services provides one on one assistance to those clients experiencing barriers to employment. Through Job Club activities, this contract also provides Albertans assistance with resume development, job search, online applications and computer skills.



Art
LAKELAND EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

Share in the Success

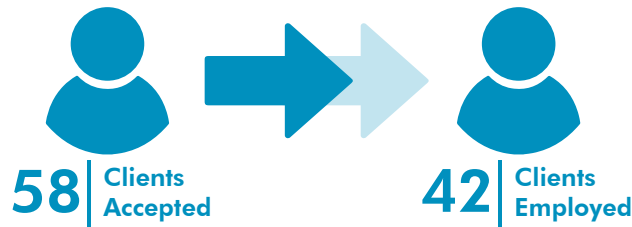
Art was referred to Lakeland Employment Services in Lac La Biche in August 2019. He had been on EI, but that had run out. Art had over 20 years of experience working when he was referred. His major barriers were the need for an updated resume, a lack of a high school diploma, and a need to update his safety tickets. Art was very motivated to work. He did have anxiety when completing exams, but did complete the required tests for his safety tickets. Lakeland Employment Services helped Art in updating his resume and helped him with support for his anxiety. The Employment Facilitator also completed market research for Art, and taught him email and computer skills, including how to attach a resume to an email and how to set up an account on a job search website. Art also learned job search skills and interview skills. He participated in Job Club activities as well.

Lakeland Employment Services called the foreman at Tri-Gen Construction in Boyle for Art. Tri-Gen was looking for a rock truck driver and were willing to train Art. Lakeland Employment Services discussed this with Art, convincing him that he could drive a rock truck. The company hired him, trained him, and employed him. Art was laid off due to a shortage of work, but was rehired by the company later in the year, once again driving a rock truck. "I am very grateful to Connie at Lakeland Employment Services for her hard work and dedication to finding me work," Art says.

LEARN 2 EARN (EDMONTON)



Learn 2 Earn Youth Skills Program at EmployAbilities is an innovative endeavor. The youth ages 15-30 who enroll the program come from diverse backgrounds with multiple barriers to employment. The focus of the program is to deliver services with “Person Centered” Planning, which emphasizes the gifts, abilities, skills, dreams and desires of the youth. In order to facilitate this process, the program uses interactive methods to keep the youth engaged throughout the program. Youth are given opportunities to demonstrate their skills and are provided with the tools to gain confidence, become motivated, and find meaningful employment.



Share in the Success

Nahom came to Canada from Asmara, Eritrea, moving from country to country for fear of being caught and jailed. He arrived in Canada in July 2019 as a refugee. He started looking for a job as soon as he arrived. Nahom was born with a disability. “My right hand is like an L shape,” he explains. “It cannot be stretched or bent. And also, my right hand has only two fingers. My left hand has four fingers. I believe when I stretched my hands to shake hands my disability was seen.”

“I was going from business to business seeking a job. There was no luck. It was hard and frustrating and at times I felt sad,” he says. “Finally, I got in touch with EmployAbilities and got accepted into the Learn 2 Earn program. This program helped me a lot to build my confidence and work with my disability. I was very happy I was in an environment that disability was seen as an ability and surrounded with friends and supporting staff.” Nahom had five interviews while involved with Learn 2 Earn, but had not received any job offers. One very cold winter day, very cold, Learn 2 Earn Program Coordinator Chandra agreed to take Nahom to meet employers and find a job.

“I believe she was also shivering,” Nahom says. “She took me to Mesobena Restaurant. I was not sure what was going to happen. Will it be another big NO?” “I was taken by surprise when Chandra said, ‘I have this great young man. I want you to hire him, please’”.

“The employer looked at me and said, ‘Yes I will help him’. I was overjoyed finally landing in a job.”

Nahom worked at Mesobena Restaurant until the COVID-19 pandemic hit. He was also fortunate to obtain a part-time position at Independent Counselling. “I am grateful for all the skills I learnt in the Learn 2 Earn program at EmployAbilities that helped me to overcome many barriers including my disability and be employed,” Nahom says.



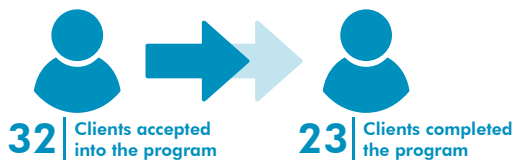
Nahom

LEARN 2 EARN

RESTART YOUR CAREER (EDMONTON)



A 24-week skills training program serving individuals with diverse backgrounds and barriers to employment. This program prepares individuals for employment in entry level positions in various industries, such as administration, transportation, customer service, hospitality and data support. Training components include professional development, computer skills, work experience and certification in First Aid, CPR and WHMIS.



Share in the Success

Blessing's background is in Information Technology. She holds a Bachelor's degree in computer science and a Master's degree in information technology. Prior to relocating to Canada, Blessing worked for two multinational oil and gas companies (Shell and Total) and had over 15 years of professional experience in IT Planning, Business Analysis, Asset Management, Project Coordination and Management. "As a new immigrant, getting employment was difficult," Blessing says, as most organizations wanted people with 'Canadian' experience and no one would take a chance on me and give me the opportunity to prove myself to them. You can imagine my frustration when after six months in Canada with over 200 applications sent out, (after) carrying out cold calls in the snow, I had no positive results. Enbridge was one of the places I went to without luck, until a friend told me about EmployAbilities," she adds.

Blessing contacted EmployAbilities, met the requirements as a Permanent Resident (PR) holder and enrolled in the six month long Restart Your Career Program. "This program helped me a lot to work on my soft skills, as I was good with my technical skills and needed to know more about the Canadian workspace. I learnt a whole lot and became a totally different person," Blessing says. "EmployAbilities gave me the very exposure required by sending me to Enbridge for my job shadows and job practicum that got my foot in the doors of Enbridge. Coming from the same industry (oil, gas and energy) I was able to prove myself and today I am gainfully employed by Enbridge," she adds. During her interview with Enbridge, interviewers shared with Blessing the

amazing references they had received from the team she did her job shadow, trial and practicum with. The interviewers also, in Blessing's words, "poured out accolades to EmployAbilities. They told me how everyone that has been sent to Enbridge from EmployAbilities has been excellent," Blessing says. "I got an offer in less than 24 hours after my interview." Blessing thanks EmployAbilities for giving her the necessary exposure and thanks Jon and Jalaja especially for believing in her even when she was losing hope. "Jon kept telling me he sees me working in Enbridge and went all out to ensure I got posted there for my job trial and practicum," Blessing comments.

Blessing says her greatest desire was working for Enbridge and EmployAbilities made this happen. "I am convinced more than ever that hard work pays," she says. "Thank you, EmployAbilities."



Blessing
RESTART YOUR CAREER





EmployAbilities Career & Employment Centre

EMPLOYABILITIES CAREER & EMPLOYMENT CENTRE

Serving clients in Edmonton, we work with clients who have a disability or medical condition to help them overcome employment barriers. We provide the support they need to find employment and stay employed.

4873 Visits by clients

109 Clients accepted into job placement services

82 Clients placed in employment

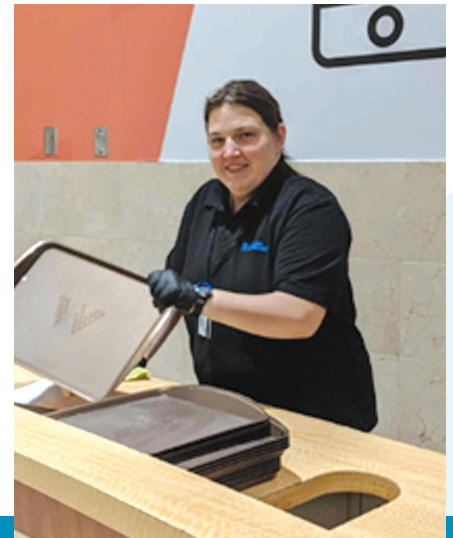
82 Employed at 3 months

Share in the Success

Sarah was a custodial worker for five years. After moving to West Edmonton, she had to commute 90 minutes to get to work, so she decided to quit her job. She was having difficulties finding work closer to home and did some research with her staff from Skills Society to find out where she might be able to get some help finding a job. Her research led her to EmployAbilities.

Sarah and her Employment Coach had a few meetings over the course of a month to update her resume, practice interviews and organize her job search. On November 8th, 2019, she joined Job Club and began working with the EmployAbilities Job Development team.

Sarah had expressed a desire to work at West Edmonton Mall, as it is one of her favourite places to go. The Job Development team were able to use their connections with West Edmonton Mall's Human Resources (HR) department to have a custodial interview arranged for Sarah. The interview went very well and West Edmonton Mall felt that with Sarah's previous experience she would be a great addition to their custodial team. Sarah began her new position on November 18, 2019. She loves working in the Mall and is happy with the commuting time – just 10 minutes.

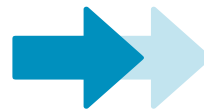


Sarah

**EMPLOYABILITIES CAREER AND
EMPLOYMENT CENTRE**



Serving the communities of Cold Lake and Bonnyville, Career Evolution North provides client-centred services to help Albertans on EI and EI Reachback of 10 years gain employment utilizing their existing skills and qualifications.



Share in the Success

Amanda had worked in administration for the same oil and gas company for 12 years until the economy took a downturn, and her position was eliminated. She was devastated and did not know what she was going to do as a single mother who needed to work to support her children. Career Evolution North met with Amanda to discuss her situation.

Amanda was interested in the assistance Career Evolution North could offer, and entered into the program willing to do whatever was needed to make herself employable again. The first step was to create a resume outlining her strongest skills and update her safety tickets to ensure she was ready for the oilfield again. Amanda applied to every administration job posted. Career Evolution North worked with her to help her market the transferable skills that could lead to her being hired for other, non-administrative jobs. Facilitators at Career Evolution North were always ready to offer encouragement and support on the days that seemed the bleakest for her.

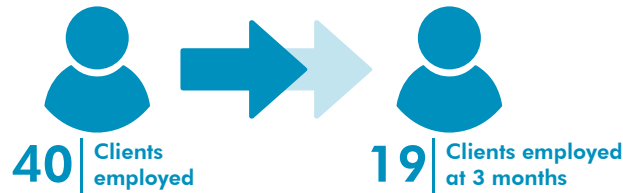
Now, Amanda is working as a Facility Operator in the local area, with a schedule that fits her and her children's lifestyles. "Stacey and the program were extremely helpful in providing great resources and keeping me accountable in my search to find a job," Amanda says. "And it paid off!"



Amanda
CAREER EVOLUTION NORTH

Career Evolution West serves Hinton and surrounding area, offering client support services to:

- unemployed or under-employed Albertans
- income support clients who have short-term medical reports
- individuals that require supports to overcome employment barriers



Share in the Success



Shawn and Bonnie at the Teck Coal's presentation

Career Evolution West client Terry moved to Hinton with his cousin from rural Saskatchewan. Terry had several barriers to employment when he arrived in Hinton. He did not have a network of people to help him with job search in the community. He was searching for employment as the COVID-19 pandemic was worsening and he had an unstable housing situation. Career Evolution West was able to help Terry create a new resume and cover letter. As well, Terry received computer instruction, help with interview skills, and referrals to community agencies for local housing resources. Career Evolution West also assisted Terry with labour market research and other Job Club services.

In February, Terry found employment with Hinton Safeway after Career Evolution West staff advocated for him with the Safeway Manager. Terry continued to work at Safeway through the COVID-19 pandemic and has been a valued member of their team. Terry says he is very happy to be working in Alberta and feels he is making progress toward a career. He says he is thankful to the staff at Career Evolution West for their support.

Shawn and Bonnie at our Teck Presentation in February. Teck Coal's Cardinal River operation was one of the largest employers in the Hinton area, and in January, they announced plans to close their operations. Teck and the United Mine Workers of America asked EmployAbilities to participate in a community resource information session, which included other organizations such as Service Canada, Alberta Supports, and other Hinton non-profit organizations. Kelly, Bonnie, and Shawn presented information on EmployAbilities, the work Career Evolution West does in the community, and the employment services Career Evolution West could provide to laid off workers once they received their official lay off. We have continued to work with Teck Human Resources and Alberta Supports to assist Teck Workers with their career transitions and career planning.

EmployAbilities offers comprehensive employment services to the Grande Prairie community. We work with people with disabilities to overcome employment barriers and we provide the supports they need to get and stay employed.



The staff team in Grande Prairie



Newly renovated space in Grande Prairie

Share in the Success

Sage has lots to offer an employer, and is learning how to market himself with help from EmployAbilities Grande Prairie. He is originally from Switzerland, and has a vast volunteer history. He has struggled with English not being his first language and with his diagnosis of schizophrenia. He also has felt anxious and overwhelmed when trying to find employment on his own. This led him to seek assistance from EmployAbilities Grande Prairie. Staff at EmployAbilities Grande Prairie realized very quickly after meeting Sage that he is a creative and artistic individual. They've used art as a medium to teach Sage how to create his first ever resume, how to complete mock interviews, and how to apply information he is learning as part of his Job Club attendance. Sage says that since coming to EmployAbilities Grande Prairie he has found a new sense of confidence. EmployAbilities Grande Prairie staff note he has grown his skills tremendously. "I love coming to EmployAbilities," Sage says. "I want to work hard just like everyone here and find a fun job I really like."

EMPLOY *Abilities* FOR NEWCOMERS

EMPLOYABILITIES FOR NEWCOMERS

In June, EmployAbilities started offering a new program funded by Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada to help newcomers with disabilities in the Edmonton region.

This pre-employment program teaches essential work-place skills to newcomers and is designed to work alongside settlement service agencies to help newcomers find success in Canada. Newcomers will learn essential employment skills and information on topics such as trends facing newcomers, the Alberta labour market, employer expectations and conflict management.

As well, the program will teach newcomers how to work with employment agencies, cultural communication skills and information about disabilities and accommodations in the Canadian workplace.

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