



Alzheimer Society

SASKATCHEWAN

Learn More Live Well



Empowering People to Live Well with Dementia

First Link Highlight Report 2019-2020

Highlights 2019–2020

From individualized client calls to support groups to province wide dementia presentations using Telehealth - the Alzheimer Society provides a wide range of services for those who connect with us. Our staff is dedicated to delivering the best possible experience to our clients at every point of contact with the Society.

Our programs and services cover the continuum of the disease including helping people to lower their risk of developing dementia. To the best of our ability and capacity, we ensure that residents from all areas of the province have access to the programs and services offered by the Alzheimer Society.

Our goal is to ensure that residents of Saskatchewan affected by dementia have timely access to support and programs that empower them to live well with dementia.

This past year we have been able to significantly expand our services and reach throughout the province. Increased funding from the Government of Saskatchewan, brought and expansion of First Link with the opening of our seventh Resource Centre in Yorkton and the introduction of two First Link Care Navigators (FLCN).

Whether you are living with Alzheimer's disease, another form of dementia, or supporting someone who is, our First Link® program connects you and your family to your local Alzheimer Society programs and other community services.

First Link is about helping you and your family make informed choices so you can live better with dementia at every stage of the disease. Connecting with First Link means you can:

- receive one-on-one or group support
- be referred to local healthcare providers and community services
- meet other people in similar circumstances and exchange experiences
- get the help you need to plan your future

This year we connected 3013 clients to our programs and services. In addition to this being the highest number of clients served, our client satisfaction survey revealed that we maintained a high level of satisfaction.

Beyond direct service to clients through our First Link program our education programs are another essential part of helping people to live well with dementia and increase inclusiveness in our communities for people with dementia and their care partners.

There were numerous learning opportunities for people with dementia and families including five Evenings of Education via Telehealth with topics including: The Road Ahead – the progression of dementia; Responsive Behaviours; Grief and Loss; and Nutrition and Brain Health. In person curriculum-based learning opportunities were offered in Regina, Saskatoon and North Battleford.

Our annual Understanding Dementia Evening of Education held every January had a record attendance this year with over 850 people attending in 50 different Saskatchewan communities.

A note on COVID19

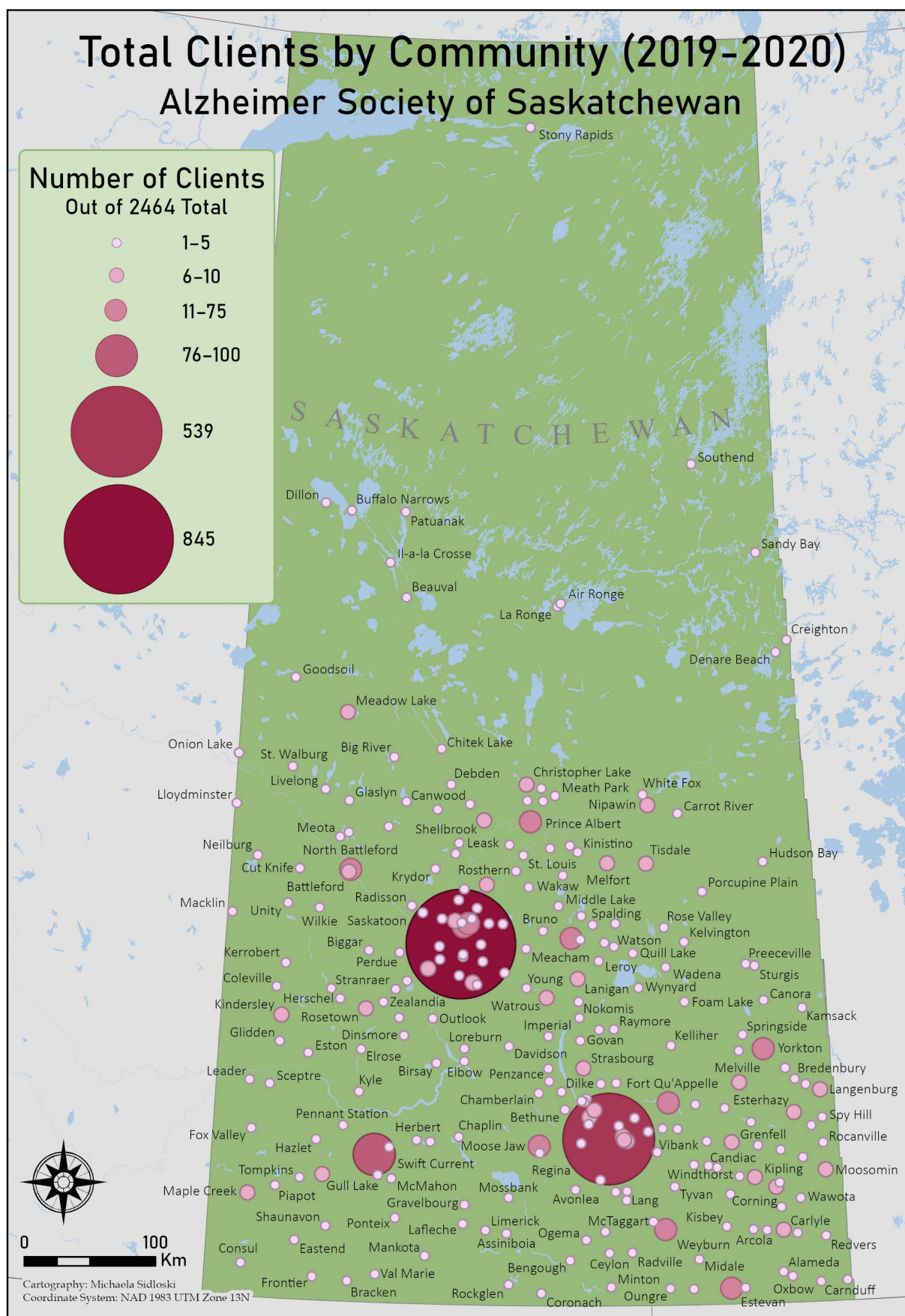
COVID19 necessitated the physical closing of our Resource Centres throughout the province, however **our services and programs have remained available to our clients and the public.**

Our first priority was ensuring the continued availability of direct contact and service provided by our First Link Coordinators.

We are now offering a full range of programming from our Learning Series to Support Groups online.

If you or someone you know needs our services, please reach out. We are here to help.

The Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan supported over 3000 clients from 290 Saskatchewan communities.



The year in numbers



18% increase in number of clients served in the fiscal year for a total of 3013 clients

7% increase in number of Saskatchewan communities served in the fiscal year



42% increase in First Link referrals from primary and specialized care. Categories include physicians, specialists, Geriatric Evaluation and Management Program, Nurse Practitioner, Rural Memory Clinics, South SK Geriatric Services.

82% of clients are satisfied or very satisfied with information, education and support services and

85% of clients would recommend Society programs and services to a friend





Heather Van Starkenberg (left) our South SK FLCN attended the Alzheimer Society of Ontario (ASO) First Link conference in December and spent week in January visiting four different ASO chapters. This allowed us to see different models of delivery and take aspects of each model to create the SK FLCN model. We are extremely appreciative of our Alzheimer Ontario partners for the generosity in sharing of resources, time, lessons learned and mentoring.

First Link Care Navigators and complex needs

The new First Link Care Navigator (FLCN) role was introduced to the Society this year. The FLCN supports clients with more complex or complicated care needs. There were numerous recruitment challenges which delayed the start of these positions, however there are now two FLCNs serving the province.

Heather Van Starkenberg has her home base in Regina and is the Team Lead for the First Link Coordinators in the South of the province. Melody Neufeld has her home base in Saskatoon and is the Team Lead for the Central and Northern areas of the province.

Their role as Navigators is to provide support for client contact, care planning and follow up particularly for those with complex care needs

"We participate in working groups with the Programs and Services team, to provide ongoing information and resources to share with clients of the Alzheimer Society and community partners. We strive to provide a holistic perspective with all clients we work with, recognizing that each person's needs are unique." - Heather Van Starkenberg

and high-risk clients. They assist these clients and care partners with navigation through the system. They also do ongoing monitoring and evaluation of First Link service delivery standards and work as a collaborative member of the Alzheimer Society's Programs and Services team.



Our First Link Coordinators serving our rural Resources Centres 2019-20

Support Groups

We have 39 support groups in the province – 5 of the groups are for people with dementia (1 of these via Telehealth), 28 caregiver support groups (4 of these via Telehealth, 1 via Telephone). There are in addition, 3 Coffee Clubs and 1 Sandwich Club for people with dementia and family members hosted by volunteers.

New this year is a Young Carers support group in Saskatoon for those who were born after 1974 and are supporting a person with dementia.

All Support Group and Coffee Club volunteers are screened, trained and required to complete four hours of professional development related to dementia and caregiving per year.

For the year of 2019, 74% of our volunteer support group facilitators met their professional development requirements. 23% did not respond to the inquiry about their completion of their professional development; and 2% were still in progress of completing their required professional development hours.

"The assistance you provide to families is extremely valuable. It really does help to know that you are not alone while you struggle with the changes that are inevitable within our families. I hope you know how important and valued your work is."

- Alzheimer Society Client

We contracted Patti Kelm, Cornerstone Learning and Consulting to evaluate the effectiveness of Alzheimer Society support groups. Support Group participants and facilitators, and staff were surveyed against the outcomes within the support group manual. The existing recorded training video was reviewed, and feedback was provided.

The support group working group has reviewed both reports and have created their 2020/21 work plan to address the gaps identified within the report.

Dementia Helpline

Nina Nyalowo (pictured right) is our provincial Dementia Helpline Coordinator.

Nina often serves as the first point of contact for many new clients and individuals seeking information about dementia, the services of the Alzheimer Society and where to turn to for help.

Nina provides direct service, like any First Link Coordinator, to clients in areas of the province where we do not have an established Resource Centre directly supported by a First Link Coordinator. Nina also supports our Telephone Support Groups.

Our Dementia Helpline is a toll free phone service available throughout the province from Monday to Friday during regular office hours. Call 1-877-949-4141 or email at helpline@alzheimer.sk.ca.



Public Awareness

A cornerstone of our efforts to build awareness about dementia, the importance of an early diagnosis and to help reduce stigma is our warning signs campaign anchored by our community presentation the ABC's of Dementia.

The ABC's of Dementia contextualizes the 10 evidence-based warning signs of dementia around a change of state in a person's abilities, behaviours or communication that impacts everyday life – the ABC's of Dementia.

In the past year, our public ABC's of Dementia presentation has been delivered 38 times with 751 total attendees. In addition our warning signs campaign is supported by a continuous social media campaign and community engagement efforts.

Our public awareness initiatives also include our Dementia Friends program and our community efforts to mobilize communities and organizations to become dementia friendly and inclusive.

How First Link Works

Outreach and Engagement

- Identify and engage potential referral sources including professionals, community organizations and individual outreach to health care professionals
- Engaged and inform the public and community through community presentations and forum, social media and other efforts

Proactive Contact to Referrals

- Direct or individual referral received by Alzheimer Society are contacted by an Alzheimer Society First Link Coordinator.
- Responsiveness depends on the needs of the client. Priority referrals responded to in no later than five business days; non-priority referrals in three to four weeks maximum.

Connecting Clients to Services and Intentional Follow-up

- Provide education and support according to client needs through available Alzheimer Society programs/services as well as links to appropriate community services.
- Provide ongoing follow-up contact with clients, links to supports and community services throughout the continuum of the disease, as appropriate.
- Provide ongoing learning and education opportunity such as our Learning Series and Evenings of Education
- All client contacts are documented in the client record, clearly identifying goals/care plan according to applicable standards.

Continuous Commitment to Quality Improvement

- Gather and analysis client data
- Evaluate First Link® and its impact at individual, community and system levels.
- Develop and review policies i.e. caseload and capacity management.

Alzheimer Society
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