

Breton Ability Centre



ANNUAL REPORT

FOR THE YEARS 2023/24

Supporting Inclusive Communities





Kevin enjoys spending time in the garden.



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A Message from our CEO



Harman Singh
CEO,
Breton Ability Centre

Dear friends,

As we work towards expanding and supporting inclusive communities here in Unama'ki - Cape Breton, I am proud to present to you our annual report.

This remarkable year has been filled with exciting opportunities for Breton Ability Centre, our program participants and our staff. Through the programming and support our incredible staff provide, our participants are able to live, work and play here in our community.

With the implementation of the Nova Scotia Human Rights Remedy in April 2023, we continued to build on the work we have already been doing to promote choice, encourage community experiences and develop community housing with our person-centered lens.

Thanks to the dedicated staff at Breton Ability Centre, we have been able to redesign the support services we offer our participants to better align with the framework outlined in the Nova Scotia Human Rights Remedy. Through this approach, we are able to offer wrap-around support that is individually tailored to each participant's needs, goals, family and community. To adopt this model, we have restructured our service department so that our social support coordinators, behaviorists and management all work under one umbrella as our newly named "Service Hub".

The ultimate goal for this change is to better prepare participants for more independent community living. We are excited and proud to say that we now have five Breton Ability Centre participants living in the community through our Independent Living Support (ILS) Program and a total of 10 community housing units.

In the coming months, we will learn more about development possibilities and expand our community housing options. We have been working towards our growth within the community for several years, and we are delighted to see what the future holds.

As we continue on our journey to promote acceptance and independence for individuals with varying abilities, we are incredibly thankful for the support of our communities, donors and staff.

Thank you for standing with us and championing inclusion here in Unama'ki - Cape Breton.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Harman Singh".

Harman Singh
CEO, Breton Ability Centre

A Message from our Board Chair



Murray Ryan
Board Chair,
Breton Ability Centre

Dear staff, participants, donors, and community members,

On behalf of the Breton Ability Centre Board of Directors, I would like to begin by thanking you for your unwavering support and dedication. Our board members see this past year as an incredible milestone for Breton Ability Centre and the people we serve.

To the wonderful staff, words cannot describe how much you mean to those who participate in programming at Breton Ability Centre. We are told over and over again about the incredible stories, progress, and memories you share with participants, as well as the support system you offer each individual who walks through our doors.

As we reflect on the past twelve months, the Board has seen the positive impacts that collaborative partnerships, investments in staff training and education, and community engagement have had on Breton Ability Centre.

We are excited to share that our census has once again been reduced as we expand our community based living options.

As we continue to expand this area of the organization, we want to emphasize our commitment to individuals with varying abilities and their families.

To ensure that we continue to offer the best possible service to our participants, we partnered with Excellence Canada to launch the Organizational Excellence Standard at Breton Ability Centre. The launch of this initiative has provided Breton Ability Centre with a planned and progressive approach to establishing outstanding performance in the areas of quality, innovation and wellness.

We look forward to sharing future updates on this initiative with you as we continue to research, review and set industry best practices in order to create innovative services for our participants.

Thank you again for your continued support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Murray Ryan', written over a faint, larger version of the same signature.

Murray Ryan
Board Chair, Breton Ability Centre

Breton Ability Centre participant, Eddie, preparing lunch for friends.

Life skills such as cooking are practiced at Breton Ability Centre to provide a deeper level of independence.



Year in Review

Number of
Community
Homes:

10

Number of
Participants
Moved to
Community
Based Homes:

7

Total
Number of
Participants
in Community
Homes:

32

Number of
On-the-Job
Training
Placements:

18

Number of
Learning and
Employment
Centre Training
Programs:

10

Number of Participants:

110

Dollars Raised Through
the Charitable Foundation:

\$82K+

Number of Employees:

483



STAFF FEATURE:

Meet Kim Ivany, Residential Care Worker (RCW) at Breton Ability Centre

Kim Ivany has been a valued member of the Breton Ability Centre team for over 14 years.

As a Residential Care Worker, Kim is participant-focused and works to increase community inclusion by creating opportunities for participants to engage in community experiences. Kim can often be found taking participants to the Mayflower Mall, local beaches, walking trails and community events.

Kim is always a team player and works with participants to meet their needs. For example, Kim's commitment shone through when a participant was refusing the meals they were provided. Kim was able to secure the funds to purchase an air fryer so that she could work with the participants to prepare meals they enjoy.

The leadership team, staff and board would like to thank Kim for her continued commitment to the participants of Breton Ability Centre.

Program Highlights

NEW YOUTH PROGRAM 'FLOURISHES' AT BRETON ABILITY CENTRE

A new youth program named Flourish is now being offered at Breton Ability Centre. The program aims to empower participants to achieve their own goals and overcome challenges.

The three-month program is part of Breton Ability Centre's Learning and Employment Centre, and is designed to provide a safe and supportive environment where youth can develop personal skills, connect with peers, discover new passions and achieve successes at a variety of levels.

Participants will learn about what it is like to live independently through a training component that simulates living in a small apartment or community home. They will also receive hands-on job experience through Breton Ability Centre's social enterprises. Additionally, Flourish will



Max showcases his hydroponic grow system for the vegetable garden he's growing through the Flourish program at BAC.



offer a range of activities to cater to different interests and abilities, including budgeting, crafting, kitchen skills and more.

DOLL THERAPY BRINGS JOY AND NEW BEGINNINGS TO PARTICIPANT

The implementation of a Doll Therapy program has demonstrated remarkable outcomes. Doll therapy, or Reborn Therapy, is a type of therapeutic interaction between a participant and a doll which is hand crafted to resemble a real infant.

- Benefits of Doll Therapy
- Emotional Support
- Improved Social Skills
- Cognitive Stimulation
- Decreased Anxiety and Stress
- Sense of Responsibility
- Increased Self-Esteem

Participant Success Story

A participant at Breton Ability Centre who engaged regularly in recreational activities had been suffering from loneliness during the COVID-19 pandemic. The feelings they were experiencing led to a shift in behavior due to lack of socialization.

Doll Therapy was introduced to provide this participant with an emotional and social support system. After receiving their reborn doll, named Georgie, the participant felt that they had something to love and care for, and something to shift their emotions to. This sense of responsibility and companionship led to more positive behaviors for the participant.

To this day, wherever this participant goes, so does doll Georgie.



NUTRITION & FOOD SERVICES PROGRAMS BRING TASTY NEW DINING OPTIONS

New programs provided through the Food Service Department have been initiated to teach program participants basic food preparation skills and make food choices independently.

One notable aspect of this initiative is the introduction of a new self-serve dining station in the main dining room. The station provides participants with the tools needed to prepare their own toast, sandwiches and cereal, as well as microwave meals. A variety of food and beverage choices are available if individuals choose to prepare breakfast or lunch for themselves. Weekly self-serve options have been well received by participants with some fan favorites being the taco bar, pasta bar, pancake bar, sundae bar and a dessert bar to name a few.

The department plans to continue offering activities that foster independence, with a focus on making healthy food choices, learning basic food preparation skills and food safety.



INDEPENDENT LIVING SUPPORT (ILS) PROGRAM TAKES OFF WITH 5 PARTICIPANTS NOW LIVING IN COMMUNITY HOUSING

The purpose of the Independent Living Support (ILS) program is to promote independence, self-determination and social inclusion by creating a flexible and responsive support system that incorporates the strengths of a participant using a person-directed and collaborative approach.

Since October of 2023, Breton Ability Centre has been a proud ILS service provider and currently supports five individuals, who live in the community.

Participant Success Story

Ryan MacDonald, a participant of Breton Ability Centre and active community member, is one of the individuals who have benefited from the ILS program.

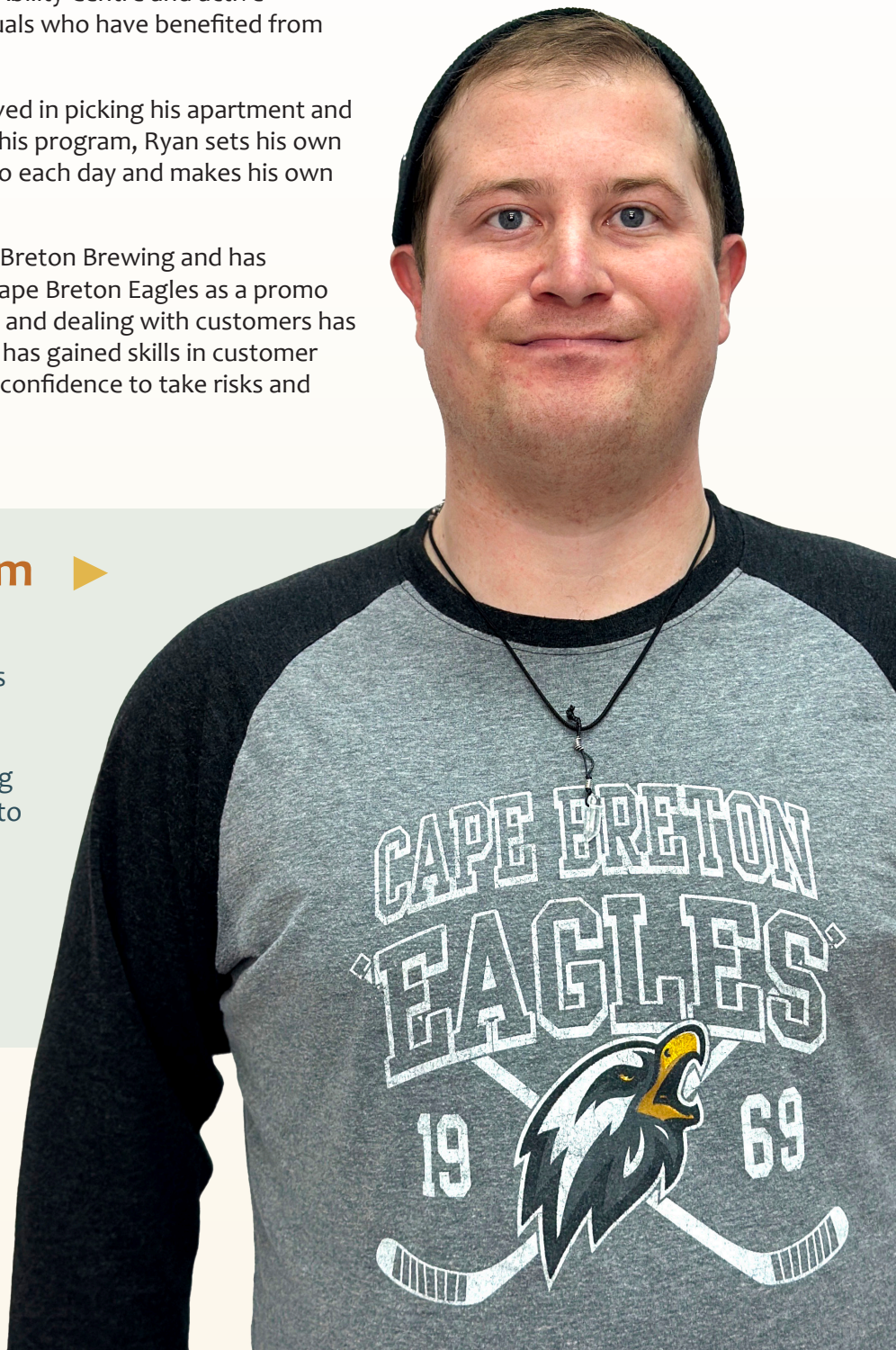
Through the ILS program, Ryan was involved in picking his apartment and determining his support needs. Through this program, Ryan sets his own schedule, decides what he would like to do each day and makes his own choices.

Ryan is actively employed at Winners and Breton Brewing and has recently celebrated eight years with the Cape Breton Eagles as a promo team member. Working in the community and dealing with customers has helped Ryan on an interpersonal level. He has gained skills in customer service and communication as well as the confidence to take risks and make his own decisions.

“There’s always room to grow” ▶

Ryan participated in a video series entitled ‘Inclusive Conversations’ about inclusive employment, transitioning to independent living and barriers he had to overcome to reach his goals.

**INCLUSIVE
CONVERSATIONS**



Property Development Highlights

- A construction agreement has been signed with DORA Construction for a new 4-bedroom community home for Breton Ability Centre in central Sydney. The home will be situated on approximately 7.5 acres of land and is expected to be completed by fall 2024.
- Two participants have moved into a home purchased by Breton Ability Centre. The home is located in central Sydney with close proximity to bus routes, parks, grocery stores and restaurants.
- The purchase of a triplex has resulted in the creation of 1 private rental along with 2 units designated as community homes for Breton Ability Centre participants.
- An office rental space on Charlotte Street for community support staff including our Person Directed Planning program has increased our community presence.
- Upgrades to our living supports and community homes to enhance comfort and safety for all residents and staff. Upgrades include the installation of generators at all community homes.





PARTNERSHIP FEATURE:

Munroe Academy Students Experience Clinical Practice Setting at Breton Ability Centre

In October of 2023, Breton Ability Centre partnered with Munroe Academy to offer a group of students enrolled in the International Baccalaureate (IB) program the opportunity to participate in a clinical practice setting. The placement took place over the academic year with students coming into Breton Ability Centre on scheduled days off.

Students worked with Learning and Employment Centre teacher, Alyssa Kowalczyk, and Recreation Coordinators, Leona Farrell and Nikayla Rosnok, to gain first-hand experience working with individuals with intellectual disabilities and autism.

The students had the opportunity to build relationships with Breton Ability Centre participants, assist staff in preparing and delivering essential programming, complete training centered around supporting people with disabilities and spend time with Psychiatrist, Dr. Scott Milligan.

The placement provided IB students at Munroe Academy with important insight and perspective as they begin their journey as medical professionals. Breton Ability Centre is proud to work with the youth in our community to help ensure that future disability support reflects a person-centered approach.



Person Directed Planning Program Encourages Local Photographer's Dreams

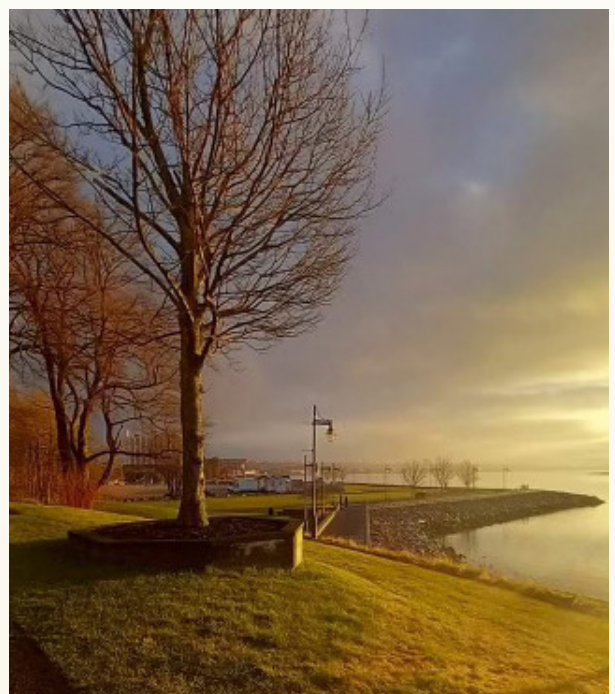
Melanie Bonnell is embarking on a new chapter in her life as she transforms her passion for photography into a small business.

For 15 years, Melanie dedicated herself to a fulfilling career at a local Guest Home. Unfortunately, due to medical issues, she had to leave her profession. Determined to overcome her challenges and regain her footing, Melanie found joy in the art of photography.

Recognizing Melanie's talent, Grace Chisholm from Breton Ability Centre's Person Directed Planning Program connected Melanie with local print shop, City Print Plus. Together, they worked to create prints and provide space for Melanie to host her first pop-up shop.

"Melanie joined the Person Directed Planning Program with a goal of re-entering the workforce. As I got to know her better, I discovered her immense passion for photography. After witnessing the sheer beauty captured in Melanie's photographs, I knew it was imperative for the community to witness her talent as well" says Grace Chisholm, Support Navigator, Person Directed Planning Program.

"Grace has bolstered my confidence and has been quick to help me facilitate opportunities to showcase my photography. I collaborated with City Print Plus for my first photo printing, and I even had the honor of being featured on Saltwire's Weather Network. Taking this leap has brought me immense happiness, and I am thrilled to be taking my photography to the next level," says Melanie, Cape Breton Photographer.



Spreading Love and Community Inclusion at Breton Ability Centre

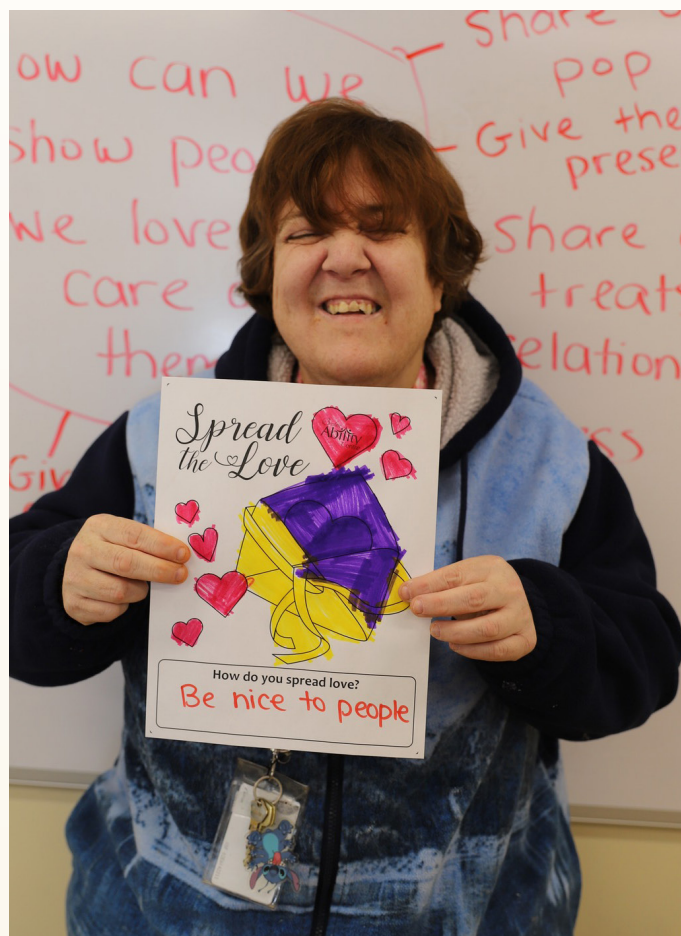
Breton Ability Centre's Spread the Love campaign started five years ago to help promote inclusion and acceptance for people with varying abilities.

Each year, members of the Cape Breton community and beyond are encouraged to send valentine cards to participants of Breton Ability Centre programming.

This year, Breton Ability Centre partnered with the Cape Breton Regional Library and Mayflower Mall to create valentine drop off locations throughout communities in the CBRM. This partnership made the Spread the Love initiative more accessible for those who are unable to drop off valentines in Sydney and are unable to pay for postage.



Some of the many Valentines participants received this year.



Amber showing how she spreads love.



Isaiah Campbell and Andrea Beaton enjoying the Spread the Love lunch at Breton Ability Centre



Kevin (Rusty) Penny receiving the Spread the Love Appreciation Award from CEO, Harman Singh.

Spread the Love Appreciation Award

In February 2024, we celebrated Kevin (Rusty) Penny as the recipient of the annual Spread the Love Appreciation Award.

Nominated by multiple staff for his kindness, Rusty embodies what the Spread the Love campaign is all about. In his community, he is always eager to help others, often running errands for those with mobility issues and helping folks cross the street. He shows his appreciation for the Breton Ability Centre staff through his kind words and actions, and is often found helping out around the community.

The Spread the Love Appreciation Award aims to promote the diverse abilities of participants and reduce the stigma individuals with disabilities face. The award supports our continuous efforts to foster a more inclusive, welcoming community.

Breton Ability Centre Celebrates the Grand Opening of New Recreation Trail

This year, Breton Ability Centre celebrated the opening of a new recreational trail called L'sipuktuk. Located in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq People, L'sipuktuk holds deep cultural significance. L'sipuktuk is a Mi'kmaq word meaning "the river meeting the ocean".

The name of the trail symbolizes the coming together of nature's elements, reflecting the harmony and unity that Breton Ability Centre strives for in the community. Breton Ability Centre would like to give special recognition to Bernie Francis, who helped with naming the trail.

The opening of the trail is just one of the ways Breton Ability Centre is transforming the way individuals with varying abilities are supported.

L'sipuktuk has become a cherished space, not only for participants and staff at Breton Ability Centre but for the broader community as well. The trail is located at 25 Inclusion Drive, Sydney River, and is open for all to enjoy.

L'sipuktuk was made possible through a generous donation from the NSLC's "For the Good of Our Community Fund".





