



# STRENGTH IN PEOPLE

Integrity | Passion | Accountability | Quality | Teamwork

2020-2021 Annual Report



Spirit of  
Our Youth

“

What is remarkable about the year is the dedication, passion and support that WJS employees brought to their work day in and day out.”



## ► Caroline Bonesky

**T**here is only one word that will resonate in the history books when people around the world reflect on 2021 and that is ‘COVID’.

The effects of the pandemic were felt by individuals, families, communities, countries, and the global community as everything from access to haircuts to air travel were impacted. WJS/ Spirit worked through the pandemic in over 60 locations across BC, AB and Ontario providing essential services to vulnerable individuals and families.

The impacts were enormous on our staff and our persons served. Daily routines were affected by school closures, the elimination of recreational activities, limited access to any in person interactions. We managed through restrictions and variants management and public health orders. We mourned

the loss of family members, persons served, neighbours and friends. As our year closed in March, we were actively seeking vaccinations for both ourselves and those that we support.

What is remarkable about the year is the dedication, passion and support that WJS employees brought to their work day in and day out. Staff who travelled to different communities to ensure that clients could be supported when whole teams went into isolations. Program staff who created online videos to assist in skill development. Managers who worked many hours on the floor when no staff were available. WJS values of passion, integrity, accountability, team work and quality showed up hourly, daily and weekly as we maneuvered our way through the pandemic world.

Over 630 staff supported over 1600 clients to manage through the pandemic, achieve their goals both big and small, so that they could live their life on their terms. Staff teams in Alberta navigated their way through two virtual accreditation surveys, one from CET and one from CARF, both of which had excellent results. The highlight

in both cases was the surveyors recognition of the passion of our staff teams.

Our HR team brought on board a new performance management system and created over 180 online courses which our employees accessed thousands of times. Our clients services delivery model was rolled out across the organization, bringing a focus to how we individually support people in a consistent and accountable manner. Our Truth and Reconciliation Journey continued with land acknowledgement, cultural training and the introduction of mandatory training for all staff.

WJS looks forward to 2021 when we will see the pandemic become more manageable, when the doors will open wider for face-to-face interaction, and once again both persons served and employees can live fuller lives. We are aware that everyone will continue to feel the effects of the pandemic for months and years to come, but we are committed to supporting our employees so they can continue to support the persons served with their never-ending commitment and passion.



WJS, along with all Canadians, was pushed on all fronts to adapt to the Coronavirus pandemic as it swept into every community.”

► Tim Beachy



WJS, along with all Canadians, was pushed on all fronts to adapt into the Coronavirus pandemic as it swept into every community during the last year. We are all acquainted with the changes required in our private and public lives: isolating, distancing, masking-up, cleaning, communicating electronically, shopping on-line and many other adjustments. And there, at the crossroads between public and private lives, WJS staff stayed on the front lines in every way and in every place. It has been a tough year to serve people who are vulnerable and who need the services we offer.

On behalf of the WJS board of directors I want to thank the staff who stayed engaged, worked every day, isolated themselves when necessary, worked when others were isolated, adapted to new conditions of those they serve, helped individuals and families through their tough times, and maintained professional service standards. Thank you, thank you, thank you!

It is remarkable that within our staff group of 700 and more than 1500 clients, we had a relatively limited number of people who were affected by the virus. Although we managed a number of outbreaks in Alberta and BC, approximately two dozen staff and clients became infected. We express our sympathy to the families of two clients who lost their lives to the virus. We know that our staff teams were deeply affected by the loss. As we move forward I thank the staff teams who went above and beyond to ensure that supports were there when employees had to self isolate.

also want to express the Board’s deep thanks to the senior management group: Caroline Bonesky as CEO and leader, Carol Siziba, as Chief of Client Services, Monty Chew as Chief of Finances, Debbie Olinyk as Chief of Human Resources. There are many others in management who deserve our recognition and thanks. It is great to see the teamwork, dedication, purpose and values expressed through the WJS field of activity.

As we closed out the 2020-2021 year, we have begun a renewal of the company’s strategic plan. Many of the changes contemplated in our current plan came into real focus, some were completed, some have proved financially beneficial as well as more efficient, and other changes have taken on more significance: our Truth and Reconciliation initiative, defining and taking on a stronger role in our B-Corp purposes, our Client Services Delivery model implementation and the imbedding of our values in our employee recruitment and talent development systems.

We are pleased that the financial and workforce health of the company remains strong, though it has been a tough year to navigate the changes and adaptations required in the current environment.

On a more personal note, I want to thank and recognize the WJS Directors for their input into decision-making and their commitment to our values: Helen Ambali (Secretary), Adam Borgida (Vice Chair), Monty Chew, Aaron Hachkowski, Alex Hayer, Lisa LaForge (Treasurer) and Donna Phillips. These individuals bring a range of skills, talents and viewpoints to our decision-making. They serve the company well and diligently.

## DID YOU KNOW...

WJS is a B Corp



## THE TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION WORKING GROUP

The Truth and Reconciliation working group continues to further the understanding of indigenous issues across our organization. The committee comprising of both indigenous and non-indigenous staff meet regularly. Here's a little of what the group has achieved and continues to refine:



Russell Auger, our Indigenous Cultural Adviser has been working across all three provinces to support staff and clients.



Many staff have chosen to acknowledge the specific indigenous land or territory on which they work in their email signature.



Indigenous stories are being told across the organization. The HUB will soon hold a library of stories and resources to further our understanding.



One of the mandates of the TRC is to promote Indigenous training across our organization, Training is now live with more than 16 hours of content.

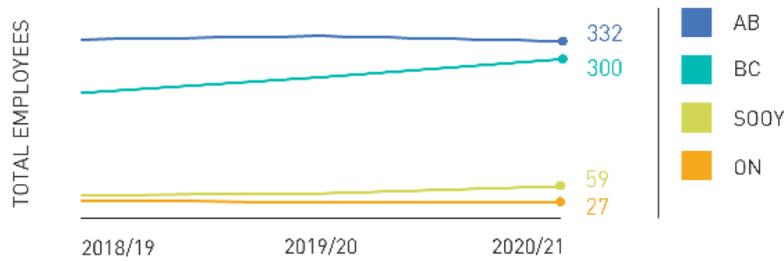


Stories of Truth and Reconciliation have featured in the press recently, we're grateful to the work of the TRC to have positioned WJS in a place of knowledge and understanding.

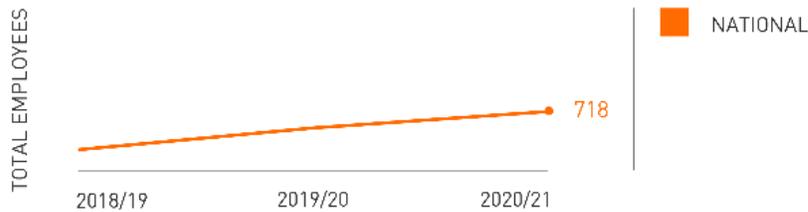
## OUR PEOPLE

Our employees are the cornerstone of our organization. Employee growth over the last number of years has been consistent. Average employee turnover for our sector is between 35-50%, WJS averages 18.52%. As we align ourselves with our values, our resilience and capability grows our strength in people.

### WJS Canada Employee Growth by Region



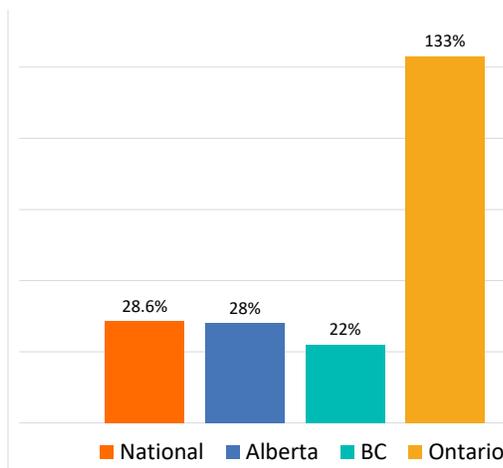
### WJS Canada Employee Growth - National



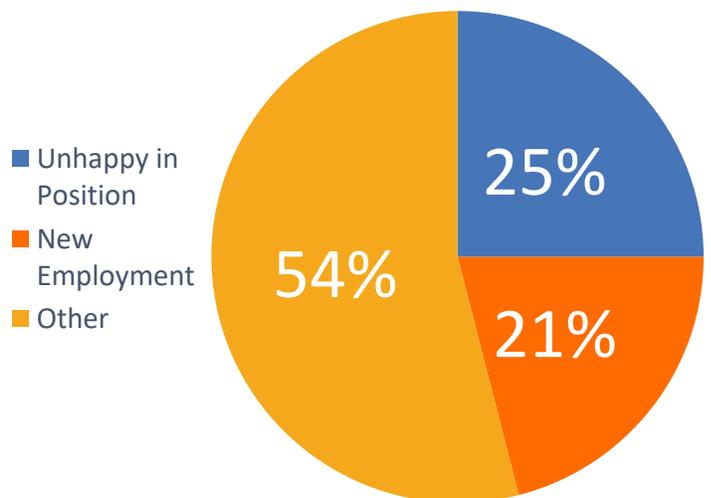
## Average Turnover Rates

This past year saw an unprecedented level of turnover in our Ontario programs. This is wholly attributable to the government decision to close youth custody centers across Ontario resulting in the closure of the Northern Youth Center. This resulted in the lay off of 25 employees.

### Average Turnover Rates

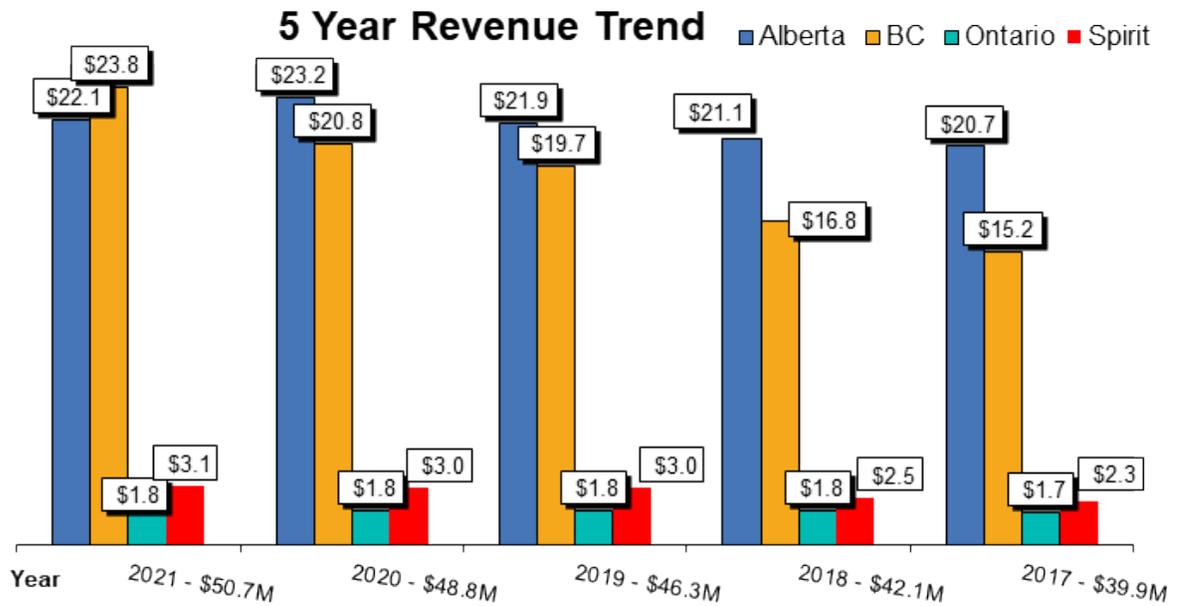


### Reason for Turnover

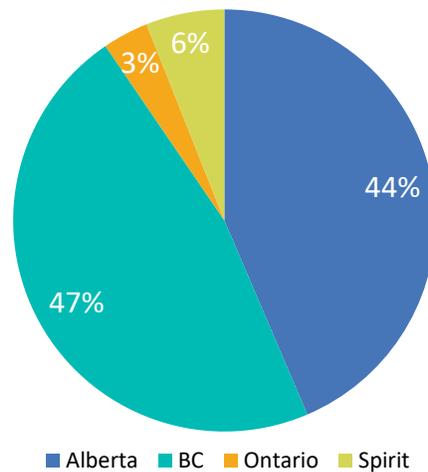


## REVENUE & FINANCE

Over the last 10 years, WJS revenue has risen from \$19,000,000 (2008) to more than \$50,000,000 in 2021.



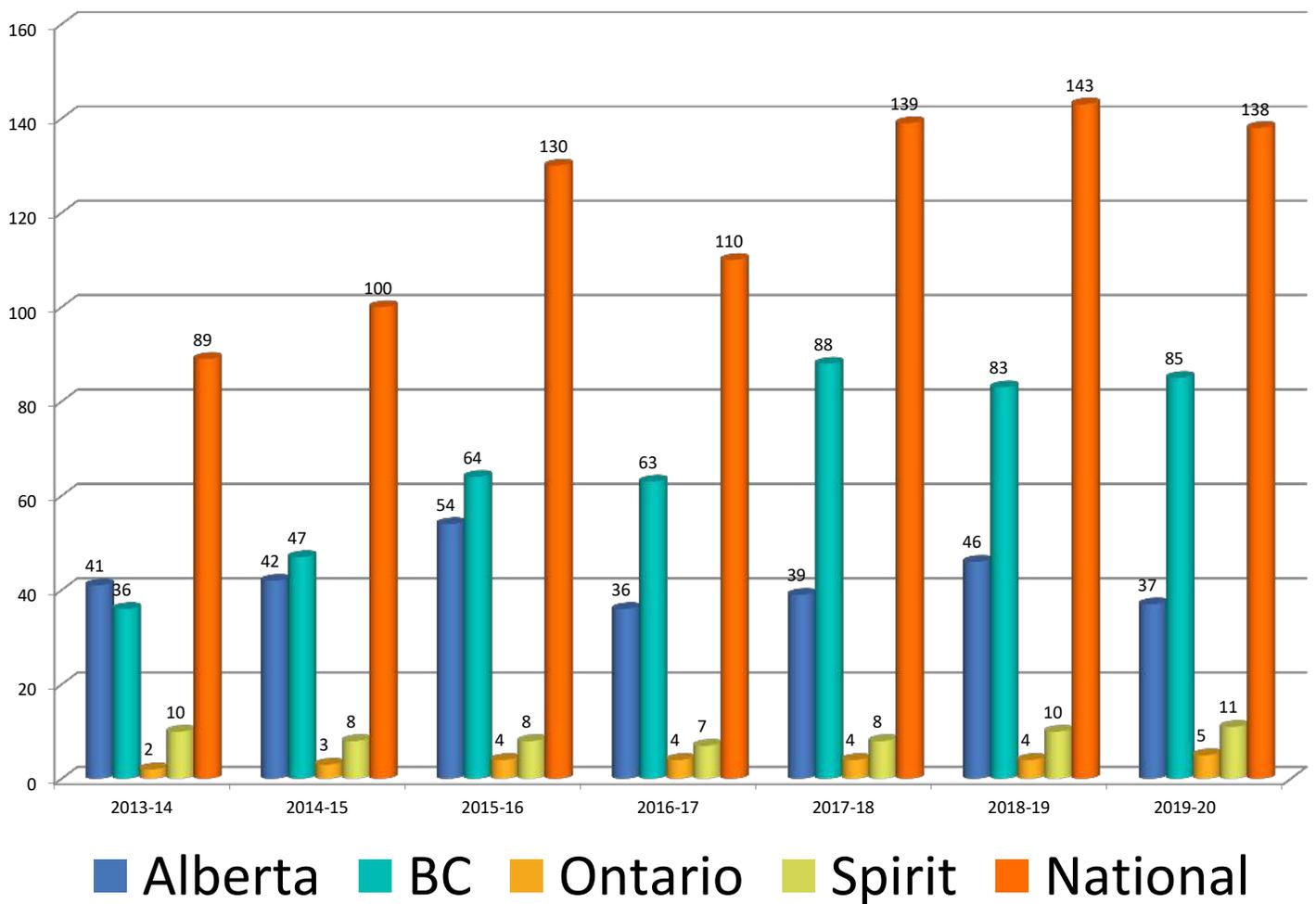
### Program Revenue Distribution



## PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Our program growth reflects our desire and ability to adapt to the needs of our clients – providing them with supports when they need them. As an organization, we understand the needs of complex cases that require specialist staff and resources to deliver the best care possible to the people we serve.

*Total Program Growth 2015 - 2020*



## A Snapshot of Our Year

We began and ended our year in a global pandemic brought on by the COVID-19 virus but as an essential service our doors stayed open, our individuals were supported and our staff came to work with integrity, passion and teamwork.

In British Columbia we saw a decrease in our residential services in Cranbrook when the Ministry moved to price model that did not meet our requirements. This was balanced out by an increase in child specific homes in the interior and Chilliwack as well as increased requests for services in Nanaimo. We continue to expand our relationships in the Okanagan region with Ministry for Children and Family Development offices.

We have put additional efforts into recruiting staff for our residential resources as the complexity of the needs of the children supported can make it difficult to find qualified staff. Our Emergency Resource experienced significant success with clients who far exceeded the short term stay mandate and often successfully transitioned to more permanent placements.

The pandemic provided challenges to maintain connection with many of our individuals supported through community inclusion and/or home Share arrangements in BC. The prohibition on seeing people outside of the immediate household meant that staff became creative in reaching out in public places, staggering times of center visitation

“Creativity, patience and passion were needed by all the staff teams to provide the best possible support with limited resources.”

and offering families different forms of support. Staff managed outbreaks of the virus and teams supported each other to ensure individual were not left unsupported.



The pandemic brought similar challenges to Alberta, where we managed multiple outbreaks across many different locations. Overall, we are grateful for the limited long-term impacts felt by our staff and clients. Spirit of our Youth locations went above and beyond to support youth and staff when they were both affected by COVID 19. Spirit staff continue to emphasize the importance of cultural practices and are integrating them more frequently into daily life. Spirit of our Youth continues to be approached to take youth with more complex care needs and work is underway to determine how to best meet these changing needs.

Our Support to Families programs in Alberta worked through challenges of not being able to see their families face to face but needing to ensure that parents and children had time together. The Drive program saw a significant reduction in number of drives being offered to facilitate connection between family members and as a result we saw a reduction in the staff in this program. Creativity led the day with Family Support workers finding ways to connect outside, when weather permitted, and an increased use of video connection ensured the safety and security of families during these stressful times.

Our clients with diverse abilities in Alberta experienced the effects of COVID as it limited their ability to have very many interactions outside of their homes. Those who had work or volunteer commitments saw those disappear during times of restrictions. Access to recreation centers and other outside activities

became very limited. The staff adapted and supported all the clients to try to adjust to pandemic restrictions when many were unable to truly understand why restrictions were needed to manage the virus. Creativity, patience and passion were needed by all the staff teams to provide the best possible support with limited resources.

The biggest change was in our Ontario programs, where after 30 years of service to the Ontario government, our custody center contract was terminated. This was part of a larger provincial redesign due to the low levels of occupancy of youth justice custody beds. We continue to have a small team of staff serving youth in three communities through attendance centers and alternate school programs.

All of this work was done within the context building out our Clients Services Delivery Model, working on our Truth and Reconciliation Journey and in Alberta achieving ongoing accreditation with CARF and a new accreditation award from CET for our programs which support people with developmental disabilities. Our Fort MacMurray teams faced the challenge of a flood, which required moving clients multiple times, under COVID imposed restrictions.

WJS and Spirit staff are to be commended for their extraordinary commitment during extraordinary times.