

# L'Arche Canada Inclusive Housing Solutions Lab

## Stewardship Partners Team Profiles

**ZOËL BREAU**, Executive Leader  
L'Arche Saint John  
<https://larchesaintjohn.org>



Originally from Tracadie-Sheila, NB, Zoël moved to Saint John after 40 years of service to L'Arche in Canada and abroad to become the Executive Leader of L'Arche Saint John.

During his college and university years, Zoël volunteered and became a member of L'Arche in the province of Quebec.

In 1983, he joined L'Arche Greater Vancouver to serve the community for 4 years as community leader before becoming Regional Coordinator in Western Canada and the United States and then National Vice Leader and National Leader of L'Arche Canada for a total of 18 years.

After a 9-month sabbatical in L'Arche in Argentina (learning Spanish), Zoël became the leader of L'Arche Montreal for 3 years followed by becoming International Delegate for L'Arche International for 7 years.

**L'Arche Saint John** is a community of people with and without intellectual disabilities, sharing life together in Saint John, NB. Mutual relationships and contemplative reflection are at the heart of our journey together.

McKim House, the centerpiece of L'Arche life in Saint John, first opened on June 7, 2005. The stately home on the west side of Saint John was named after George and Charlotte McKim, early champions of the establishment of a L'Arche community in our city. McKim is home to five core members who share the home with three live-in assistants. Through celebration, creativity and contemplative reflection, our daily life is transformed into something extraordinary.

In 2016, we opened Creative Connections on Prince William Street in uptown Saint John. The collaborative arts program and gallery welcomes individuals with and without intellectual disabilities to share in the gifts of creating.

Since our inception, we have been the only L'Arche community in New Brunswick, and we are delighted to now be working with a committed team of caring individuals to see a L'Arche community established in Fredericton.

## REVEREND JASMINE CHANDRA

Stone Church (Saint John, NB)

<https://www.stonesj.org/>

<https://penniesandsparrows.org/>

## ST. JOHN'S (STONE) CHURCH

Jasmine is the daughter of radio missionaries and spent 12 years stationed in Monaco. After returning to North America, she received a B.A. in Religious Education with a major in Counselling. This was followed by an M.Div. at Wycliffe College in Toronto where she met Terence. Jasmine moved to New Brunswick after marrying Terence in 2006. In New Brunswick they served in various parish settings for the first 8 years of ministry. They both had a vision for more community-based ministry and in 2014 Terence and Jasmine launched a community outreach organization now called "Pennies and Sparrows".

Pennies and Sparrows focuses on repairing the social fabric in the city of Saint John. Through relationship-based programs and projects, this ministry engages with some of the most marginalized people in the community. In 2020 Terence and Jasmine became co-priests in charge of Stone Church. Terence and Jasmine have two kids and find that sharing jobs and sharing child care, while at times complicated, has been one of the greatest joys in life (and can only be accomplished by the grace of God).

For decades **Stone Church** has supported mission partners in their work around the globe. Currently we support 35 different groups and individuals and seek to give 20% of our total annual offering in mission giving. In the heart of Saint John, we also offer weekly Bible studies, a Friday night Drop-in, prayer groups, laundry room, personal care ministry, seniors ministry and study groups, all aimed at discovering the heart of Christ in one another and seeking the greater good of our community.

Serving the downtown core (or Uptown as locals call it) of Saint John NB, Pennies & Sparrows seeks to care for those in unstable circumstances and on the margins of society. In partnership with other community organizations and churches in Saint John, we provide English language groups, support groups, drop-ins, children's activities and relationship-focused programs; bringing people together and pointing them to the source of all hope.

## MARTIN CHIASSON, Board Member

L'Arche Saint John

<https://larchesaintjohn.org/>



Martin is a French Acadian from Cape Breton N.S. who currently resides in Saint John, New Brunswick.

After graduating from Saint Francis Xavier University, Martin embarked on a 32-year career with Xerox Corporation holding senior leadership positions across Canada. Martin currently

devotes his time volunteering for causes he believes in and contribute as best as he can including being an active member of the Board for L'Arche Saint John.

Martin and his wife Gisele are the proud parents of three adult children: Jacques, Francois and Louise. Proudest accomplishment from both personal and business perspectives is along with Gisele assisting their oldest son Jacques, who was diagnosed with developmental challenges very early in life, to become a kind and happy young gentleman. He is a big believer in leaders constantly working towards having both a healthy mind and healthy body as they strive to be the best they can be!

**LUCIA DEMAIO**, Policy Specialist  
New Brunswick Association for Community Living  
<https://nbacl.nb.ca>



**New Brunswick  
Association For  
Community Living**  
**Association du  
Nouveau-Brunswick  
pour l'intégration  
communautaire**

Lucia identifies gaps in policy and supports provided to persons living with an intellectual or developmental disability in New Brunswick. Working with other staff at NBACL and the larger disability community, she formulates the legislative and policy priorities and options that NBACL uses to advocate for an inclusive life for persons with disabilities and their families.

Lucia attended law school at the University of New Brunswick and is called to the New Brunswick bar. She also has a Master's Degree in public policy. Prior to joining NBACL she practiced labour, employment and human rights law in Fredericton and worked in public policy.

**The New Brunswick Association for Community Living (NBACL)** is leading in the creation of opportunities for people with an intellectual or developmental disability to live full and valued lives in all aspects of society.

The New Brunswick Association for Community Living is a provincial, non-profit organization that works on behalf of children and adults with an intellectual or developmental disability and their families. We work to ensure that people with an intellectual or developmental disability, with the support of their families, have the option to choose the supports they need to live meaningful lives and participate in their communities as valued and contributing members.

**KEN FORREST**, Director of Community and Growth  
City of Fredericton  
<https://www.fredericton.ca/en>

Ken Forrest is the Director of Planning and Development for the City of Fredericton.



Ken has over 25 years of experience in the planning field. He returned to Fredericton in 2013 after spending five years in Saint John as Commissioner of Planning and Development. In Saint John, he oversaw the completion of Saint John's national award-winning municipal plan.

Ken has also worked in Alberta and Nova Scotia over the course of his career in addition to his time spent in New Brunswick. Mr. Forrest holds an Honours degree in Political Science from the University of Alberta and a Master's degree in Urban and Rural Planning from Dalhousie University (TUNS) and has also studied at the University of New Brunswick and the University of Virginia. He is a full member of the Canadian Institute of Planners and a Registered Professional Planner in the Province of New Brunswick.

**Fredericton's Planning and Development Department** delivers services in land use planning, building inspection, heritage and urban design, and First Nation relations. The Department has overall responsibility for Imagine Fredericton; the City's municipal plan as well as the zoning and subdivision processes. The Department works closely with the public and private sector development community to encourage development that meets the community's immediate and long-term needs while enhancing quality of life for Frederictonians.

**KIT HICKEY**, Executive Director  
Housing Alternatives (Saint John)  
<https://www.housingalternatives.ca/>



HOUSING ALTERNATIVES INC.

Kit Hickey is the Executive Director of Housing Alternatives Inc. & Rehabitat Inc. Kit has been with the organizations since their beginning and also serves as Past President of the New Brunswick Non Profit Housing Association and is a board member of several other non profit organizations in Saint John. Kit received the CMHC Award for Outstanding Contribution to Co-operative Housing in 2004.

**Housing Alternatives** has been providing development and property management services to housing co-operatives and non profit housing organizations in the Saint John, NB area since 1981. Rehabitat, incorporated in 1985, owns 145 units of non profit housing for seniors, families and non elderly singles in the Saint John and surrounding area.

Our mandate is to add to the housing supply and provide housing related services, so as to improve the quality of life for people of low to moderate income in New Brunswick. An entire range of services are provided, including property management, development, maintenance, and bookkeeping. Bookkeeping services are also available to other non-profit groups.

**STACEY HOWE**, Self-Advocate  
Saint John

My name is Stacey Howe. I live in Saint John, New Brunswick. I have spastic quadriplegia cerebral palsy and chronic pain.

I work a few hours a week. I love to hang out with family and friends. I love art, reading, and shopping.

I consider myself a very outgoing person. I love to help people and I think I am a good listener and care about other people.



**SANDI MACKINNON**, Executive Director  
Greater Fredericton Social Innovation  
<https://www.socialinnovationfredericton.com/>

Sandi MacKinnon, Executive Director of Greater Fredericton Social innovation, brings to life a spirit of cooperation and collaboration. This involves a keen eye for potential partnerships on shared problems or challenges, the ability to build a team where there was no team before, and then to promote this new direction to the community. The result is a new creative energy emerges in the community, and the positive feeling of making a difference.

**Greater Fredericton social innovation** works to strengthen our community by focusing collective efforts & resources on community defined goals.

Programs include: Non-Profit Data Collection, Civic Tech Fredericton, Senior Wellness Action Group, NB Voices & The Narrative Project, and hosts the Community Inclusion Network (youth development, food security, affordable housing).



**BEN MCNAMARA**, Inclusive Education Specialist  
NB Association for Community Living  
<https://nbacl.nb.ca/>

As the Inclusive Education Specialist, Ben is responsible for the planning, implementation and execution of inclusive education initiatives and to provide direction, training and expert support to NBACL program staff in order to advance inclusive education in New Brunswick.



Ben joined the Stewardship Team as the Director of Youth and Adult Programs where he was responsible for the development, management, and evaluation of programs and

initiatives related to supporting youth and adults with an intellectual disability and their families.

When Ben moved to the role of Inclusive Education Specialist, Lucia DeMaio, joined the Stewardship Team. (The Lab appreciates NBACL's ongoing support.)

**The New Brunswick Association for Community Living (NBACL)** is leading in the creation of opportunities for people with an intellectual or developmental disability to live full and valued lives in all aspects of society.

The New Brunswick Association for Community Living is a provincial, non-profit organization that works on behalf of children and adults with an intellectual or developmental disability and their families. We work to ensure that people with an intellectual or developmental disability, with the support of their families, have the option to choose the supports they need to live meaningful lives and participate in their communities as valued and contributing members.

**MARY MERSEREAU**, Board President  
L'Arche Fredericton  
<https://www.larchefredericton.org>



Mary is twice retired, the first time from a 25-year career in Health Care and more recently following the succession of the family business located in Fredericton. Mary served as Board Secretary for L'Arche Fredericton from September 2017 until June 2020. On July 1, 2020, she stepped into the Board Chair/President role.

**L'Arche Fredericton** started in 2010, as Willow Tree Community, a group of people were brought together by a note in a church bulletin. At first, monthly gatherings with core members (individuals with intellectual disabilities) and friends socialized around games, food and fellowship. In 2013 incorporation under charitable status was achieved. In 2018 L'Arche Canada approved our community as an official project.

**SHAWNA MORGAN**, Self-Advocate  
Saint John

I'm an artist with Creative Connections in Saint John. I'm diabetic with multiple disabilities. I'm a disability advocate. An avid reader. I'm a caring person, I wear my heart on my sleeve. The project means a lot to me because persons with disabilities' thoughts and opinions about housing are being taken into account; they are part of the process.



**JENN POWER**, Atlantic Regional Leader  
L'Arche Canada  
Cape Breton, Nova Scotia  
<https://www.larche.ca>



Jenn Power has been a member of L'Arche for over 25 years, having moved to Cape Breton to join the L'Arche community there in September 1994.

A proud Newfoundlander, Jenn has been blessed to have been raised with a strong sense of community and belonging, both of which have played a key role in sustaining her commitment to L'Arche. The L'Arche values of mutual relationships, welcome, simplicity, and respect for each person are at the core of her life and work supporting people with intellectual disabilities and building community together.

Jenn has a passion for inclusion - for helping to create a world where everyone belongs, and where each person's voice is heard, and their contributions valued. She has had many teachers throughout her time at L'Arche who have helped to inspire her work and shape her values.

Jenn is currently the Regional Leader for L'Arche in Atlantic Canada, where there are seven communities of L'Arche across three provinces. She lives in Orangedale, Cape Breton, with her husband and four children.

The Mission of **L'Arche** is to:

Make known the gifts of people with intellectual disabilities, revealed through mutually transforming relationships.

Foster an environment in community that responds to the changing dreams and needs of our members, while being faithful to the vision and core values of our founding story.

Engage in our diverse cultures, working together toward a more human society.

L'Arche demonstrates that with friendship, belonging, and the opportunity to contribute their gifts, people with intellectual disabilities flourish and their lives make a difference. They take a variety of valued roles – employees, volunteers, leaders, artists, teachers, friends, and family – contributing to the lives of their families, friends and communities.

Living with difference and vulnerability is challenging, yet L'Arche demonstrates that when all people, including the most marginalized, take their place, society becomes more human – more colourful, welcoming, creative, compassionate, and joyful.

The Vision of L'Arche is rooted in relationship and belonging:

- Mutual care, respect, and compassion between people with and without intellectual disabilities
- Sharing ordinary, daily life with all its joys and sorrows
- Living, working, learning, and celebrating together in communities of belonging
- Transforming our lives as we embrace our gifts and imperfections
- Recognizing that we need each other and are better together
- A model of inclusion, a way of peace, and a sign of hope for our world.

The L'Arche relational model breaks down barriers between those who give and those who receive supports. It replaces society's emphasis on independence that leaves so many people lonely, with interdependence where each person flourishes as they contribute their gifts for the good of others.

**DAN RITCHIE**, Manager of Cities

Cities Deepening Community - Vibrant Communities, Tamarack Institute

Halifax, Nova Scotia

<https://www.tamarackcommunity.ca>

Dan's background ranges from supporting health care, youth leadership and sustainability. With an introduction to community development through

not for profits, Dan's formative years were spent running outdoor leadership programs for youth across Nova Scotia. These experiences led to completing a Bachelor in Community Development and Environmental Sustainability from Acadia University. This program involved working directly with grassroots organizations and community groups in Canada and abroad.



Dan also holds a Masters in Strategic Leadership towards Sustainability (MSLS) at Blekinge Institute of Technology (BTH) in Karlskrona, Sweden. This program led to an appreciation and understanding of how incorporating systems thinking and reducing silos are essential for solving complex problems. Before joining the Tamarack Institute Dan worked directly with health care providers in Canada to create environmental benchmarking tools and developed educational content focusing on sustainability.

Volunteering his time with community groups such as Halifax's Global Shapers hub, Dan has a keen interest in engaging change on a local level. Outside of work Dan seeks "flow state" through basketball, music, photography and improv comedy.

**The Tamarack Institute** is a connected force for community change.

The Tamarack Institute develops and supports collaborative strategies that engage citizens and institutions to solve major community issues across Canada and beyond. Our belief is

that when we are effective in strengthening community capacity to engage citizens, lead collaboratively, deepen community and end poverty, our work contributes to the building of peace and a more equitable society. Tamarack's work is comprised of two key areas of impact:

#### Learning Centre

Our Learning Centre exists to empower community changemakers to achieve greater impact. We draw upon our 18 years of experience leading community change and advancing practice to support municipalities, funders, non-profits, and community leaders through on-demand coaching and consulting, in-person and digital training, and publications that guide change efforts.

#### Vibrant Communities

In Vibrant Communities we support cities and local leaders to develop and implement large-scale change initiatives through learning networks.

Our belief is that when we are effective in strengthening community capacity to engage citizens, lead collaboratively, deepen community and reduce poverty, our work contributes to the building of peace and a more equitable society.

**KURT SCHMIDT**, Community Coordinator  
L'Arche Fredericton  
<https://www.larchefredericton.org>



Kurt Schmidt is currently the L'Arche Fredericton Coordinator, with a primary focus on the IHSL. He has lived in L'Arche communities in Canada and the United States and has been involved with the L'Arche Fredericton community since its beginnings in 2010.

Kurt is an educator by training and trade, specializing in mathematics and religious education. He is also a lover of music, poetry, and sports -- especially soccer and tennis.

**L'Arche Fredericton** operates a Day Program, called "Hub." Activities occur several times a week, in a variety of settings. A cooking skills class, called "Hub in the Kitchen", takes place twice a week at Greener Village under the direction of Chef Yves Deschaine in his teaching kitchen. "Hub in the Arts Studio", a program of art workshops is held at the Charlotte Street Arts Centre with Angela Black of Open Your Art.

**LORI VAANHOLT**, Vice National Executive Director  
Innovation and Impact – L'Arche Canada  
<https://www.larche.ca>



Lori is a passionate networker who is interested in each idea and relationship she encounters as an opportunity to open up her thinking in new ways. Lori is responsible for strategic national initiatives to leverage L'Arche values and expertise in collaboration with diverse government, disability supports, community, and academic partners. Lori is a long time learner, advocate and connector within the broader movement for inclusion and belonging.

Along with her leadership roles in 6 L'Arche Communities across Canada she has served in a variety of leadership and Board roles in the not for profit sector. Lori says that among her most impactful teachers about belonging are the men and women with intellectual disabilities who have been some of her closest companions throughout most of her life.

Lori currently lives in Northern Ontario with her husband and four children.

The Mission of **L'Arche** is to:

Make known the gifts of people with intellectual disabilities, revealed through mutually transforming relationships.

Foster an environment in community that responds to the changing dreams and needs of our members, while being faithful to the vision and core values of our founding story.

Engage in our diverse cultures, working together toward a more human society.

L'Arche demonstrates that with friendship, belonging, and the opportunity to contribute their gifts, people with intellectual disabilities flourish and their lives make a difference. They take a variety of valued roles – employees, volunteers, leaders, artists, teachers, friends, and family – contributing to the lives of their families, friends and communities.

Living with difference and vulnerability is challenging, yet L'Arche demonstrates that when all people, including the most marginalized, take their place, society becomes more human – more colourful, welcoming, creative, compassionate, and joyful.

The Vision of L'Arche is rooted in relationship and belonging:

- Mutual care, respect, and compassion between people with and without intellectual disabilities
- Sharing ordinary, daily life with all its joys and sorrows
- Living, working, learning, and celebrating together in communities of belonging
- Transforming our lives as we embrace our gifts and imperfections
- Recognizing that we need each other and are better together
- A model of inclusion, a way of peace, and a sign of hope for our world.

The L'Arche relational model breaks down barriers between those who give and those who receive supports. It replaces society's emphasis on independence that leaves so many people lonely, with interdependence where each person flourishes as they contribute their gifts for the good of others.

**FIONA WILLIAMS**, Lab Coordinator  
L'Arche Canada  
Fredericton, NB  
<https://www.larche.ca>

Fiona joined L'Arche Canada in 2020 to coordinate the Inclusive Housing Solutions Lab in New Brunswick. Fiona is a registered social worker with over 20 years' experience in community development, non-profit management, and housing advocacy. Having worked in Ontario, England and New Brunswick, Fiona brings knowledge of various policies, programs, and experiences to her work.

Within the local and provincial housing networks, Fiona has established her reputation as a collaborative and innovative partner. Her work is driven by the belief that housing is a human right, as is the right to make choices about how and where we live. Housing is more than a shelter, it is where we make our home and "home" is unique to each of us.

**L'Arche** in Canada is working with other disability support organizations, persons with intellectual disabilities and their families, and diverse community-based organizations to explore new solutions to creating accessible, affordable housing options for persons with intellectual disabilities within neighbourhoods where they live, belong, receive supports, and contribute their gifts.

The Solutions Lab will break down the silos between systems that are a barrier to creating inclusive, affordable housing. We will bring together multisectoral stakeholders - persons with lived experience, faith and cultural communities & other neighbourhood associations along with community development, disability supports, non-profit & cooperative housing organizations and social purpose businesses to cocreate innovative solutions that simultaneously:

- increase the number of inclusive, affordable housing units accessible to persons with disabilities,
- shift the developmental services model to more individualized, community-based supports, and
- use Asset-Based Community Development approaches to develop housing models and approaches which strengthen capacity for vibrant, inclusive, and resilient communities

Facilitated by consultants from SHIFT Collaborative this Solutions Lab will help catalyze change both at the grassroots and the systems/societal levels through both a local,

community-based lab and a national Community of Practice bringing together diverse national partners committed to sharing knowledge and developing innovative solutions.

### Lab Facilitation

**STACY BARTER**, Co-Founder & Director  
SHIFT Collaborative  
[www.shiftcollaborative.ca](http://www.shiftcollaborative.ca)



Stacy is a learning specialist, facilitator and coach who has worked for over 25 years with a wide range of communities, non-profit, and public sector organizations in Canada and Latin America. She specializes in systems change processes and has led and supported numerous social innovation initiatives, including several Housing Solutions Labs. She has deep belief in the resilience of communities, and a passion for bringing people together across diverse experiences and perspectives, harnessing this for deeper impact on issues that matter. Stacy lives in Lekwungen territory on Vancouver Island with her family and backyard chickens.

**MICHELLE COLUSSI**, Co-Founder and Director  
SHIFT Collaborative

Michelle has worked in and with community change groups and organizations, across a wide range of roles, since 1990. She is passionate about social and environmental justice and has first-hand experience of the power of collaboration to make positive change. Her skills include systems thinking and strategy, facilitation of shared goals, training and coaching to build capacity and learning and adaptive action. Michelle enjoys travel for work and pleasure, yoga, hiking, kayaking, cooking, reading and hosting, often with her husband and son.

**SHIFT Collaborative** is a cooperative that helps people to work together across sectors to make progress on tough social and environmental challenges. The team brings its experience in social innovation, community development and collaborative change processes to support the Solutions Lab process design, facilitation and evaluation. Through this, they are supporting Solutions Lab partners and participants to learn and innovate together, shifting together from

- working in isolation to working collaboratively;
- addressing symptoms to tackling root problems;
- dealing with single issues to changing systems, and
- linear planning to real-time experimentation and adaptation.