



**United Way / Centraide**

Central NB / Région du centre du N.-B. Inc.

## A Restrospective: A Look Back On Our Covid Response A Year Later

*It's been one year since COVID-19 became part of our daily lives here in Central New Brunswick. It's an anniversary we likely never dreamed of, but one most of us won't forget. This pandemic has forced all of us to change quickly, and often. When public health restrictions began last March, we immediately saw some significant gaps in our community. Those who were marginalized before the pandemic were suddenly pushed even further behind. Access to the people, places and supports that helped them get through the day were now out of reach. The in-person programs and services people in our community depended on were forced to close overnight.*

*With support from a generous donor, the 11 United Ways across Atlantic Canada came together and responded immediately to help fill these gaps. On March 17, 2020, we launched a COVID relief fund, the [Atlantic Compassion Fund](#). This collective response was a game changer for many communities in our region, and it's one we're very proud of.*

*United Ways have always been a bridge between donors and community need, and collectively we quickly jumped in to make that connection easier and faster than ever. The response from community was heartening – individual donors and businesses stepped up, gave generously, and found innovative and creative ways to help. Their trust in United Way meant we were able to quickly provide food, connection, safe shelter, transportation and mental health supports to those who needed it most. It was a bright light in what was otherwise a dark time.*

*We are forever grateful for this demonstration of compassion for community and the acknowledgement that we're stronger as a municipality, province and region when we look out for one another. This point in time has inspired us to keep creating, innovating, and finding more ways to stand up for the needs of community.*

*There have also been incredibly important lessons learned over the past year. Many of the changes forced by public health measures have made us a kinder, more empathetic community and province. The supports created to help people during the pandemic helped us all reflect on the importance of things like an adequate income, a safe place to call home, healthy food and basic access to the internet. We appreciate human connection, social relationships and the ability to keep in touch more than ever. Inequities and racism are even more obvious. The onus is on us to keep these lessons at the centre of how we rebuild and reconnect our communities and organizations. Looking forward, we believe that instead of trying to get back to the status quo, we should all be working toward (and expecting) something better for those around us in our community.*

*The pressures of the pandemic are still great, and the uncertainty can make it difficult to plan for or contemplate the future. And yet, many of us do have the time, opportunity or privilege to look ahead and consider what might be next. If that includes you, we encourage you to think bigger and bolder.*

*How can we build stability into our community, so our businesses, non-profits and residents are more resilient? How can we take that kindness and compassion that was so visible and empowering during the height of the pandemic, and make it part of our everyday narrative? We've seen how racism and inequities are holding people back – how can we truly make diversity and inclusion a priority?*

*It's questions like these, and United Way of Central New Brunswick's core values of adaptability, compassion, respect, trust and collaboration, that will inform our way forward.*

*As an organization, we know that we can and must do better. If you too want to live in a community that values people and allows them to live their best lives, now is the time to consider how you can help us make that happen. In another few years, we'll look back again at this anniversary. The question is, will our society be a better place? We think it can be, if we all work together.*

Sincerely,

Faith McFarland

Executive Director



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#1-385 Wilsey Road, Fredericton NB E3B5N6

506-459-7773

[www.unitedwaycentral.com](http://www.unitedwaycentral.com)

[office@unitedwaycentral.com](mailto:office@unitedwaycentral.com)

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