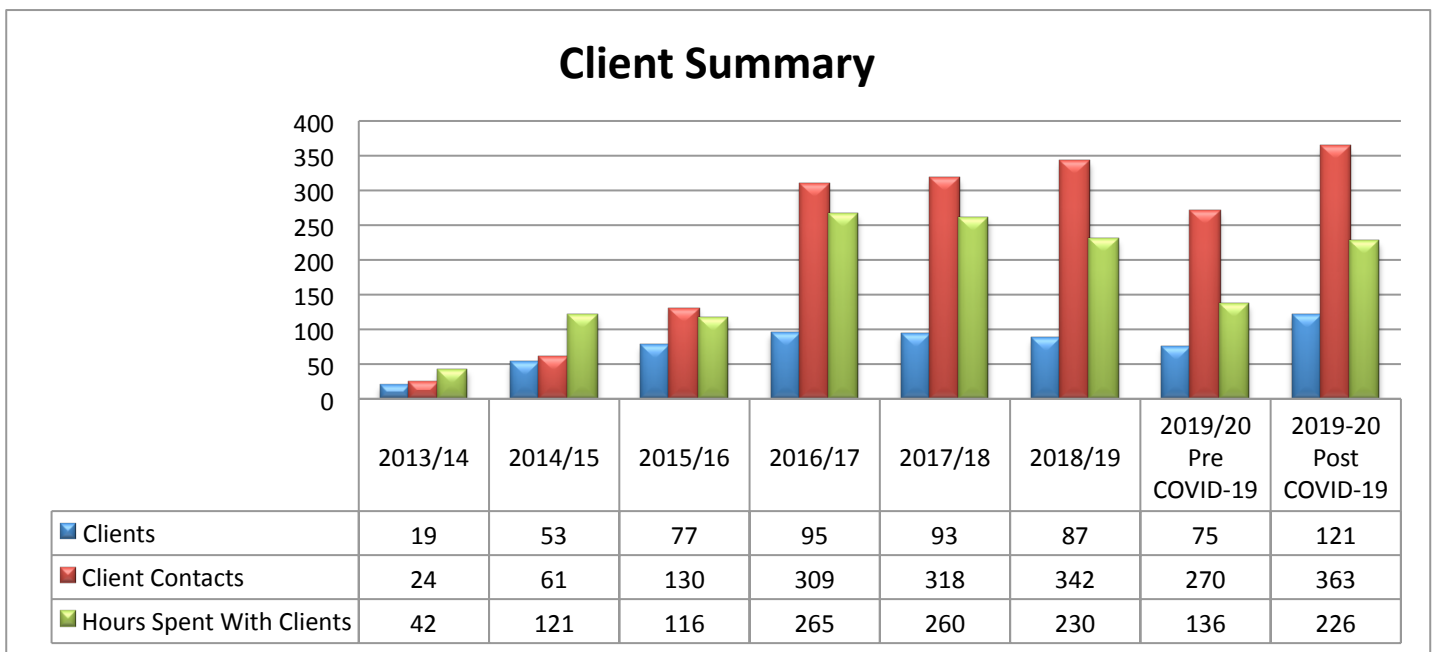


Community Information & Resource Coordination Service

At The Meeting Place Tobermory – June 2020

Service Summary and Comparison

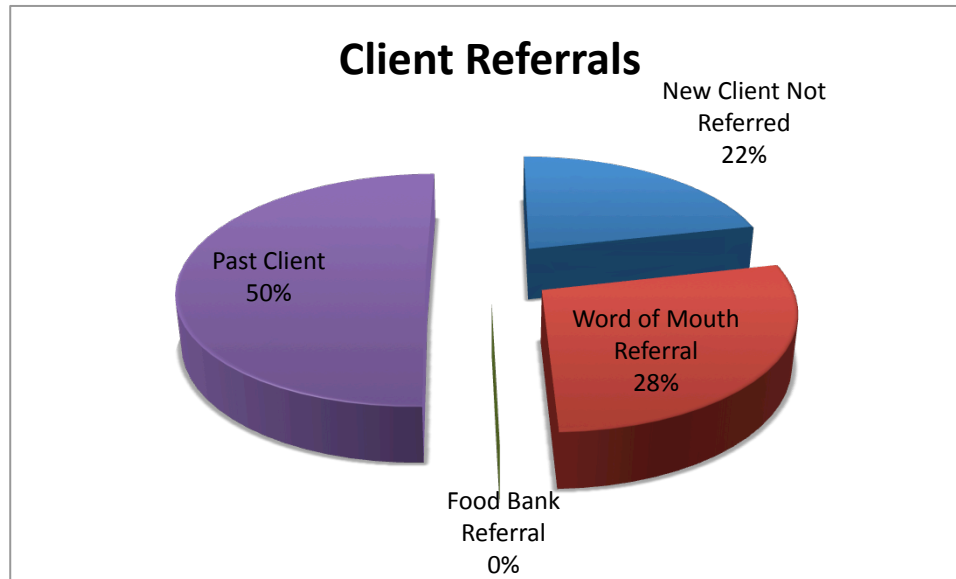
The Meeting Place ‘community hub’ provides a unique blend of rural social support called Community Information & Resource Coordination or CIRC. It’s designed to respond to those who may be in stressful situations, are isolated or need system navigation. CIRC connects people to a wide range of resources, through a skilled ‘community connector’. This informal connection and personal support approach works well for people living in small towns.



Notes:

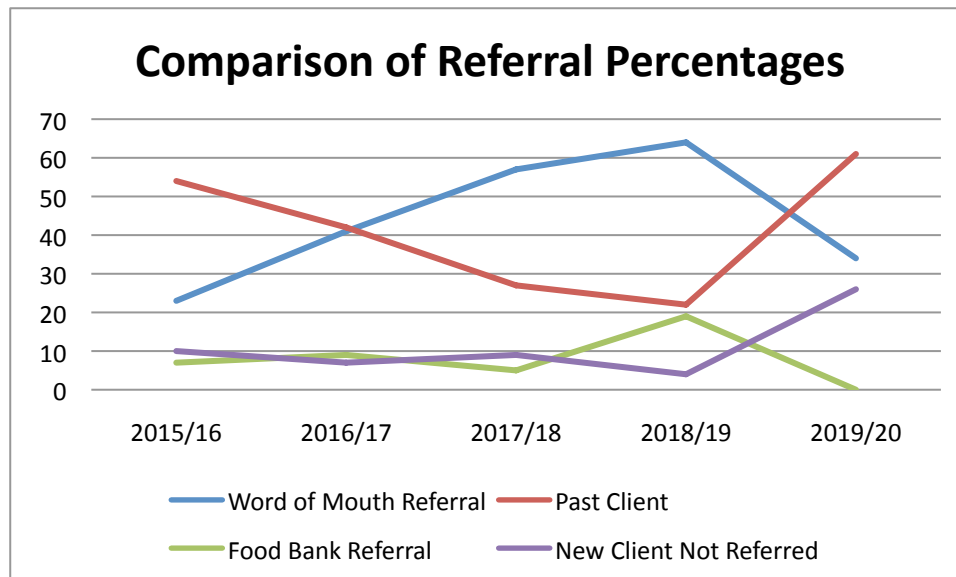
- You will notice pre COVID-19, we were on track to have a slightly lower number of clients seen by the CIRC program. After the onset of the global pandemic, there was a drastic increase in the number of clients. Enough so, that I felt it warranted breaking down the numbers on the chart to reflect totals pre and post pandemic.
- 46 new clients were assisted, and due to the pandemic, all client contacts post COVID-19 were either over the phone, or through a virtual conferencing. In order to make the process easily accessible for clients, I offered many different platforms including facetime, zoom, whereby, and facebook messenger to have virtual conversations.
- The number of client contacts is higher than the number of clients because most clients require 2 or more contacts or visits to the office, and some clients return with a new request.
- Client contacts and time spent with clients does not include the customary check-up call to ensure they received all the information and have no further questions or concerns nor does it include research conducted in their absence.

- There are 2 open files as of the completion of this report and they are not reflected in the data.
- Number of clients does not include the 56 clients the CIRC (Community Information and Resource Coordinator) contacted/booked for appointments with CVITP (Canadian Volunteer Income Tax Program)

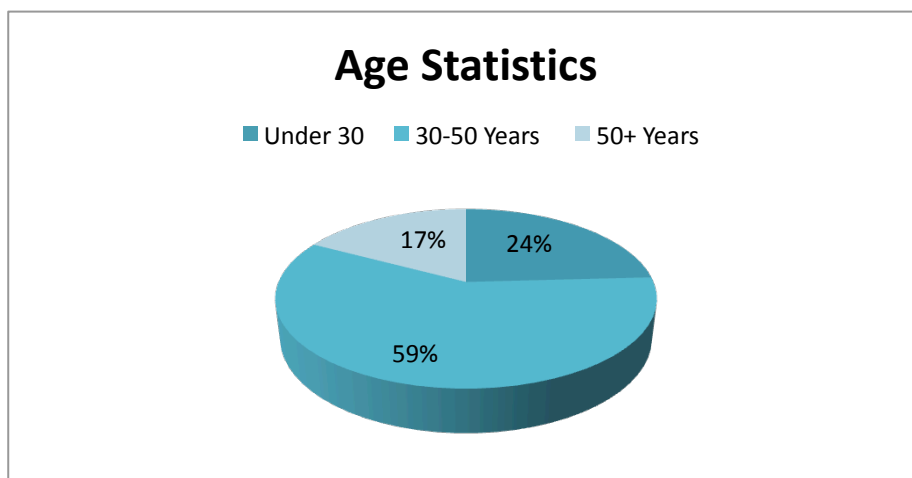


Notes:

- Past clients are always encouraged to return should they require more information and/or assistance. This year, 50% of clients had been a client in the past 3 years, which is a huge increase from 22% last year. I believe this shows that clients feel confident to return for assistance when they need it.
- The number of new clients this year represents a broader reach into the community. This trend can be observed yearly in the next graph.
- CIRC has a very close working relationship with the organizers and volunteers of our local Food Bank, granting CIRC access and permission to take clients into the food bank during closed hours should the need arise. The Food Bank volunteers know of the services CIRC provides and encourages their clients to visit the CIRC office.
- New client not referred increased from 9% to 22% this year. It is through speaking with new clients, I learned that they decided to reach out for information after following our information and updates about COVID-19 on social media. They appreciated the updates and reached to CIRC for more information and guidance.
- Again this year, a few clients were patients of the Tobermory Hyperbaric Chamber, that use the facilities at The Meeting Place as a comfortable and quiet place to rest and enjoy their lunch between treatments, and upon hearing the CIRC services offered, they requested further information.

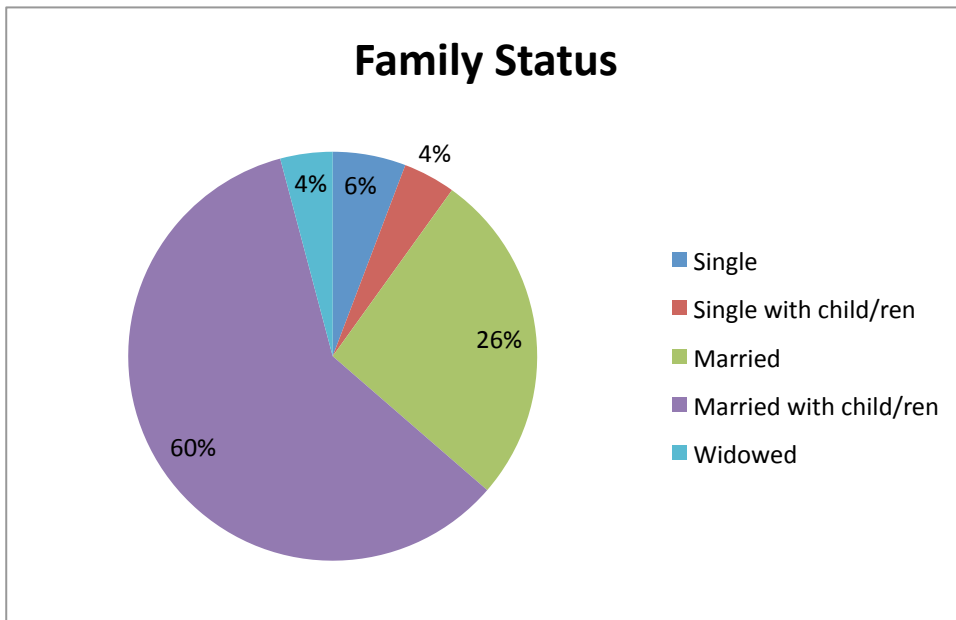


- Above, you can see a significant increase in the past clients accessing the CIRC program. This shows that the program is working! Past clients felt comfortable with the resources we provided in the past, and returned for more information and guidance when they needed it.
- Word of mouth referrals are new referrals and mostly come from past clients telling family, friends, neighbours etc. about CIRC services. The United Way GB office, Ecumenical Outreach Committee, CVITP (Canadian Volunteer Income Tax Program), as well as our Bruce Peninsula Family Health Team social worker have also referred clients to CIRC for services
- These results also support the premise, that every year is breakdown in where referrals come from and when is different than previous years. In past years, December and January were the busiest months for CIRC, and last year November saw the most clients. This year, however, April and May were the busiest month statistically, due to the global pandemic.



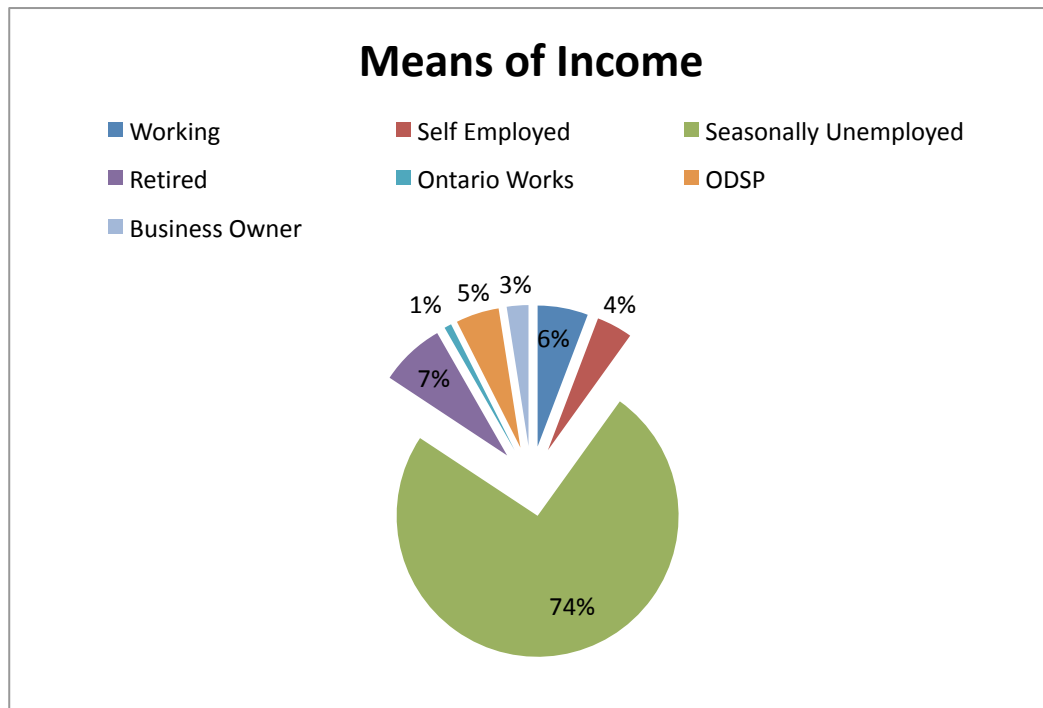
Notes:

- The percentages in this graph are exactly the same as last year, even though 46 more Clients were seen, the percentages did not change
- The majority of under 30 were single, female with children. This remains unchanged from previous years.



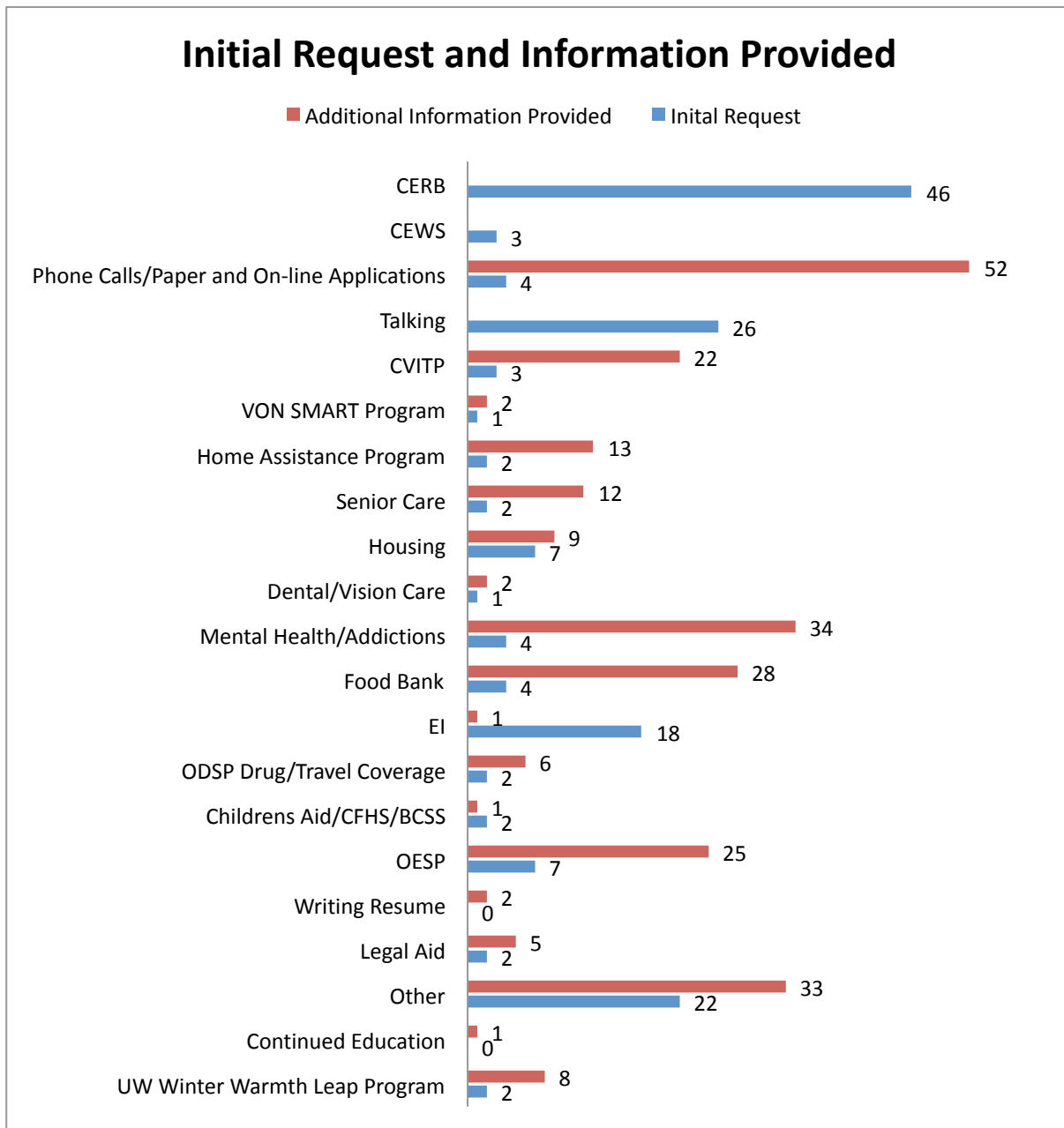
Notes:

- Married includes families with no child/ren as well as families with child/ren no longer living at home. This group increased from 2% in 2016/17, to 19% in 2017/18, to 21% in 2019/20 to 26% this year.
- 3 clients with custody of and raising grandchildren are recorded as Married with child/ren or Single with child/ren.



Notes:

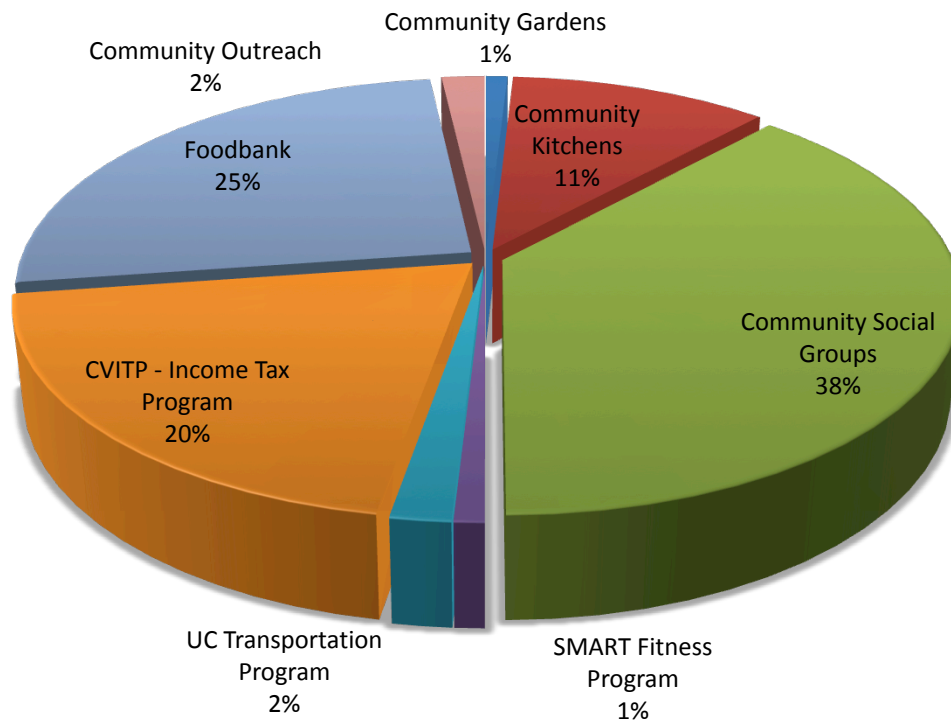
- A new category was added under means of income this year. Business owners came to CIRC for guidance and information on CEWS as well as changing regulations such as social distancing, new operating protocols and cleaning procedures.
- The above information clearly shows the majority of clients seen are married, with children, seasonally employed between the ages of 30 and 50 years old. These clients have high seasonal child care expenses which leads to financial struggles.
- 26% of clients were Male and 74% were Female, which again did not change even though there was a higher number of clients.



Notes:

- Chart above shows initial requests totalling 154. Additional information provided totals 256. A client rarely leaves with just the original requested information.
- You will notice 2 new initial requests topics on this graph. Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS) and Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB). Following the onset of the pandemic, people were scared, unsure, and since their EI had run out for many, they came to CIRC for guidance on what programs were available to help them financially.
- Some clients make an appointment, not knowing what they need help with exactly. They book an appointment to 'talk'. Starting a dialogue with no particular destination, opens up the conversation to take a natural path, and enables the client to feel comfortable, as they control the conversation.
- CIRC uses "caring questions" to open a dialogue and address other concerns the client may not have known there was help for. Some examples of "caring questions" are;
 - Have you struggled with this before
 - How do we stop this from happening again
 - Is there anything anyone in the family needs
 - Would you like to be more involved in our community
 - What is getting in your way of getting involved
 - How will you stay active this winter
 - Is there anything you would like to do for fun
- Example of how one concern can lead to many sources of relief; Client comes in that is seasonally employed, EI (Employment Insurance) has run out, and is not expected to work for another month and a half. Client is now behind in Hydro/Heating bills, which lead to falling behind in rent, phone bill and inability to buy groceries. Client is informed of the following programs; UW winter warmth/Leap program, OESP (Ontario Energy Savings Plan \$30 credit off Hydro bill), BCSS daycare subsidy (for when client returns to work), CHPI (Community Homeless Prevention Innovative grant to help with emergency housing needs such as rent arrears), CVITP (Canadian Volunteer Income Tax Program) and Food Bank and other food programs.
- OESP numbers are high as Hydro rates continue to be a burden no matter the age, income source, or marital status. Every client seen is informed of and offered assistance in completing the OESP application forms.
- Some Clients need help making phone calls especially when applying for CERB. They become stressed with not being able to get a person on the other end and give up. Wait times of over 3 hours were reported.
- 211 Ontario helpline and data base service was accessed 13 times this year, which is up from 8 times in 2018/19.

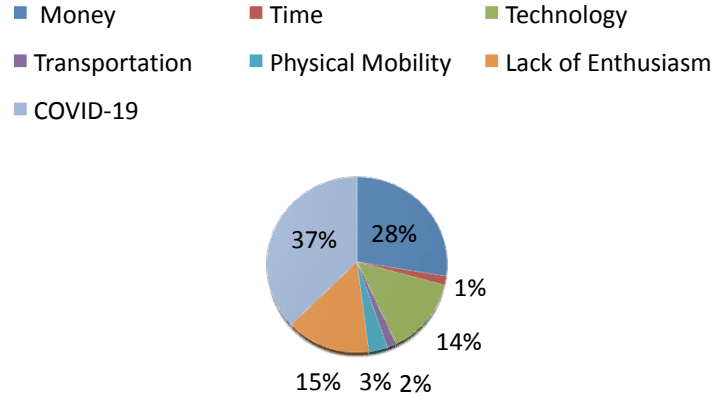
Local Community Services Offered 'Strengthening the Community'



Notes:

- By regularly attending the ecumenical Outreach committee meetings (consisting of representatives from 4 local churches) community concerns are brought to the CIRC's attention, clients are referred to CIRC for assistance, and the Outreach fund is available for CIRC to refer clients to should they have no resources, grants or programs to assist the client.
- Since transportation is an issue for many clients due to distance, weather, or access to a reliable vehicle, the United Church transportation program was recommended to a number of clients this year.
- Many clients expressed concerns about trying to eat healthy on a fixed income, so they were referred to The Meeting Place Community Kitchen, the Dollars and Sense program at TMP, and Community Gardens programs.
- Mobility restrictions for some senior clients led them to be referred to the VON SMART (Seniors Maintaining Active Roles Together) program, and well as Sharing Dance Seniors which is a popular program at TMP.
- Three years ago, the CIRC published a brochure "Community Life in Tobermory" that highlights community groups both social and fitness, youth related volunteer opportunities and other volunteer opportunities and local Churches. This brochure was offered to all clients. This brochure is a valuable resource to give information to clients that were feeling isolated, lonely, and were struggling with lack of social stimulation.
- The CVITP (Canadian Volunteer Income Tax Program) is mentioned to every client that qualifies for the program.
- By offering Local Community Services, which are different and closer to home than other information and programs, many barriers (see pie chart below) are eliminated.

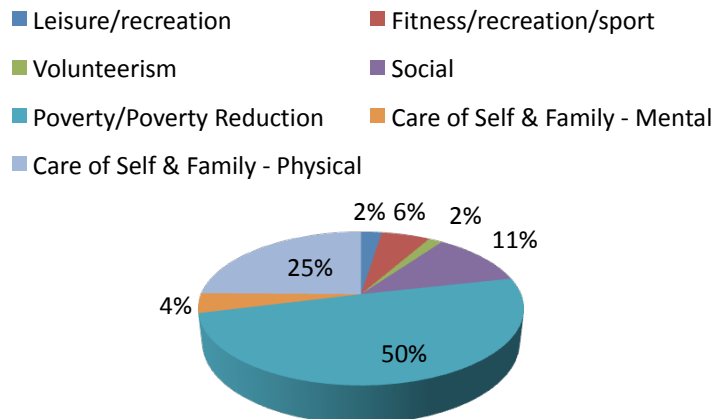
Barriers To Life Satisfaction As Reported By Clients



Notes:

- Money was always the largest barrier faced by CIRC clients, until COVID-19 came along. Understandably, it overtook the top spot for being a barrier to life satisfaction.
- There was a slight decrease in transportation as a barrier. Clients were informed of the United Church transportation program, and many CIRC Clients took advantage of that program. Movin' GB is another program available, but the cost of using that program, and lack of coverage in our area made it a unaffordable and unreliable resource. Private transportation services on the Peninsula have been short-lived.
- The barrier of lack of enthusiasm increased dramatically this year, it more than doubled in fact, which was predictable with the onset of the pandemic.
- Physical mobility barriers often related to 'getting around in winter' and fear of falling.

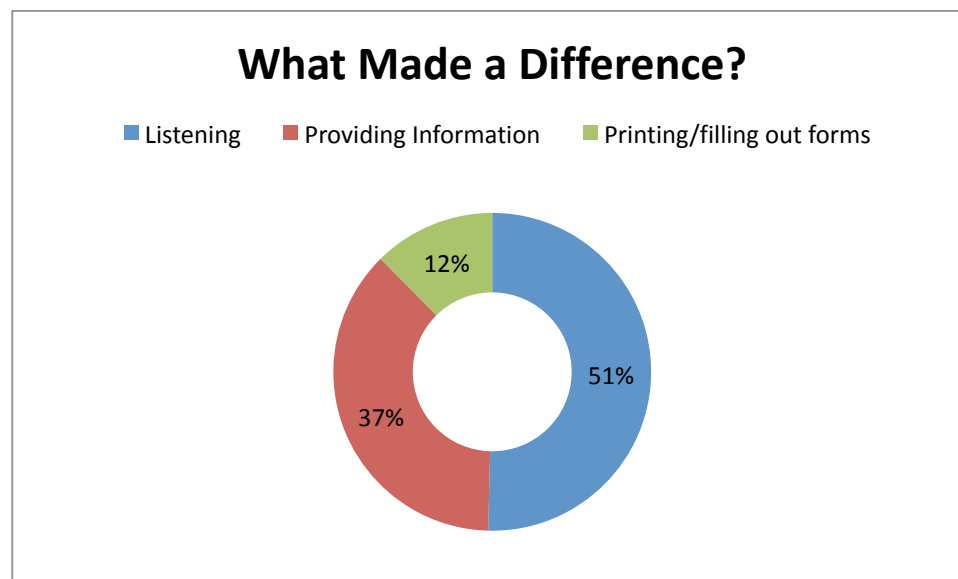
Theme Of Client Conversations



Notes:

The above chart shows the theme results of the "Caring questions asked" .

- The above chart is based on the overall interaction with a client not the initial request.
- Clients almost always come in with an initial request regarding financial distress showed as poverty/poverty reduction in the above pie chart. This statistic is up to 50% from 39% last year. Again, this is a result of the uncertainty caused by the pandemic. However, once the dialogue is open, many other concerns, interests, and goals come to light.
- Clients are historically seen one on one in a quiet, safe, and confidential setting. This environment is the perfect way to get people to open up and get to the underlying problems they didn't realize were part of the bigger problem. Due to social distancing and the closure of The Meeting Place during the pandemic, alternate methods had to be used such as the virtual meetings mentioned earlier.
- The theme may start out as poverty reduction, but after a friendly conversation, the client is suddenly excited about talking about getting out more socially, joining a volunteer organization or fitness class.



Notes:

- This is the third year tracking this outcome. CIRC always makes a final call to the client to make sure they have no other questions, concerns, or need assistance with the information they were provided before closing their file. This became the perfect opportunity to ask them what they thought made a difference for them through the CIRC program.
- Every client was offered information, and this year 37% of them said that was what made a difference to them, which is up significantly from only 3% last year. People were scared, and information and direction was invaluable to them.
- Listening is still important as reported by clients. By always asking open ended questions, not questions that can be answered with a simple yes or no, allowed the client to tell their story, and to get to the true root of their problem. Many times, the client themselves didn't know where things started to go wrong until talking it out through the resources of CIRC.

- The ability to listen to and/or tune into a client's needs is reflected in this chart as well. Some clients like a formal setting across the table from each other, while others like to be offered a cup of tea and settle down on the couch and have a conversation.
- Having more time available for CIRC allowed for more one-on-one time with the clients, and through conversation and "caring question asked" concerns and resources needed by the client other than their original request were found and addressed.
- Many clients noted that having the CIRC office open and accessible coinciding with the Foodbank hours also made a difference as it was a chance stop in, catch up, book another appointment, or just say hello.

Concluding Summary:

The services provided by CIRC in 2019/20 were exceptional, due to the quick response to the onset of COVID-19 and the changes affecting community and individual/family lives. The Meeting Place negotiated with the Municipality of Northern Bruce to align the personal support services of CIRC with the Food Bank service as 'essential' to the community. Adjustments were made and personal support was offered through many formats from phone to virtual to facebook. There is no doubt the community benefitted; a trusted name and voice was there and 121 unique individuals made contact with our Community Coordinator during the greatest time of self isolation (from March to May, 2020). Support, information and system navigation was provided over 363 contacts and many hours. The nature of support provided had many known elements but the content of information and system navigations was all new.

We thought it appropriate to give a synopsis of comments directly from Jennifer Cuffe who worked on the front lines, among many who's work was not as high profile but none the less, so important in our rural community. This work has personal and emotional impacts.

At the beginning, " as an "essential worker" I admit I was fearful, stressed and experiencing anxiety, which is a stress I have never had to encounter before. I believe this, and my ability to relate to and share similar concerns with clients on a personal level, gave me first hand knowledge and understanding of their fears, frustrations and concerns".

As time moved along, relief and new concerns emerged. "All the government supports have been great, and were supplied in a timely manner, with very few technical glitches which all clients were appreciative of. I am worried as well, that many people collecting CERB have not put away some of their benefits to pay the tax on it come next tax season. This will be a huge blow to their already precarious income in February/March 2021

There is concern for the future. "Many clients, and myself, are concerned with what will happen come fall. With the late start to the season, what will EI look like? The majority of clients rely on EI for income, and barely get enough hours to collect benefits for 4-5 months. Will they even qualify this year? If they do, will it run out in February?"

This past service year pre-Covid-19 continued to focus on conversations and access to local community services. This is important because they are close to home and most often free of charge. The Meeting Place, through its various initiatives and partnerships, hopes to continue to build assets related to food security, fitness and well-being, housing and transportation. Encouraging people to access all that our community offers, all year round is important. Community Information and Resource Coordination – CIRC at The Meeting Place is the central service to help achieve these objectives.

Jennifer Cuffe, Community Coordinator, TMP
Noreen Steinacher, Board Chair, TMP