



# Annual Report 2014-2015





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# Message from the Board Chair

**Astonished! is a profusion of creativity, capacity and diversity.**

profusion | prə'fyoō zh ən; prō- | noun [in sing. ]  
an abundance or large quantity of something:  
*a rich profusion of wildflowers:*  
*the foxgloves growing in profusion among the ferns.*

As I look back on these six years of being the Co-Chair with Grace Jasper and then Chair of Astonished! I see that A! steadily creates and shapes inclusive community and culture. A! has grown an organization that leads and supports these visions and dreams.

Day by day A! squares-up to and engages with the administrative, program, financial and relational challenges and opportunities which arise and are part of our family, community, organizational, and democratic lives.

No small thing!

Barbara Mader, a faithful Astonished! friend and supporter, says that she sees big changes in A! since the early days. Not the least of these is how happy and comfortable Core Members are and how clearly Core Members set the tone and lead the way.

Look around and notice the profusion of ways in which A! celebrates creativity, capacity and diversity!

Thanks to Brian Mitchell-Walker who is completing his term as member of the Astonished! Board. Brian will continue to serve on the A! Human Resources Committee.

We welcome, as new members to the Board, May Desnomie and we welcome Brenda Rossow-Kimball as the incoming Chair of the Board of Connectors.

A deep and wide thank-you to all of us, near and far who belong to, participate in and share in Astonished! ... *Core Members, Staff and Volunteers, Student Researchers, Families, A! Social Club and A! Leadership Team, Board of Connectors, Donors and Funders, A! Members and Supporters.*

The Astonished! vision of social inclusion is taking root in our community. These are great years for The Big Sky Centre for Learning and Being Astonished! Inc. as we experience more and more that we are .... **better together**

Respectfully,

Ruth N. Blaser  
Astonished! Board Chair



# Greetings from the Executive Director

Dear Friends of Astonished!,

This last year has been another incredible journey with many noteworthy accomplishments including:

- offering 4 person-centered programs that respond directly to Core Members' strengths, dreams, and needs
- engaging in research, teaching, and learning including 2 research projects, delivering multiple presentations, Student Researchers working as mentors in a 3<sup>rd</sup> level university course, partnering with university students on course projects, and one Student Researcher auditing a university course
- growing Astonished! at the University of Regina and in the larger community
- renewing the MOU with the University of Regina
- working on an annual funding agreement with Community Living Service Delivery
- launching an annual fall fundraising campaign '**Grow Gratitude**' and hosting our 3<sup>rd</sup> annual spring fundraiser **Wings on our Wheels ~ Astonished in Flight**'
- designing and launching a new logo and a new look on our website
- welcoming new Core Members



In all that we do Astonished! keeps focus on building a culture that is dedicated to the motto '**better together**'.

We continue to be honored and humbled by the support of the Astonished! community. I thank you for your active involvement in enabling Astonished! to offer innovative programs and engage in research.

This report will provide an overview of services and annual highlights pertaining to programs, our partnership with the University of Regina, and fundraising.

If you have any questions, concerns, or suggestions please do not hesitate to contact me anytime.

Bonnie Cummings-Vickaryous  
Executive Director

# Many Thanks

## *Board of Directors*

Ruth Blaser, Chair  
Karen Clark  
Joy Lindenbach, Treasurer  
Brian Mitchell-Walker, Secretary  
Dr. Randy Johner  
Dr. Brenda Rossow-Kimball

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## *Astonished! / University of Regina Working Group*

Ruth Blaser  
Doug Cripps  
Bonnie Cummings-Vickaryous  
Dr. Randy Johner  
Ella McIntyre  
Dr. James McNinch  
Teri Phillips  
Dr. Brenda Rossow-Kimball  
Faith Savarese

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## *Finance Committee*

Sandra Brandt  
Bonnie Cummings-Vickaryous  
Joy Lindenbach

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## *Global Fundraising Committee*

Ruth Blaser  
Bonnie Cummings-Vickaryous  
Heather Dorgan  
Brenda Rossow Kimball

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## *Spring Fundraiser Event Committee*

Bonnie Cummings-Vickaryous  
Heather Dorgan  
Deb Ottenbreit  
Brenda Rossow-Kimball



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## *Program Advisory Committee*

Kelsey Culbert  
Bonnie Cummings-Vickaryous  
Judy Humphries  
Dr. Randy Johner  
Ella McIntyre  
Brenda MacLauchlan

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## *Astonished! Communications*

Brenda MacLauchlan

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## *Placement Students & Program*

### *Volunteers*

Angel Genereux	Brittani Bruder
Brittany Haidt	Carmelle Gerein
Cassandra Hanley	Catlyn Todorovich
Chandra Hovington	Christina Kaytor
Courtney Bell	Erin Hilts
Eryn Langdon	Haley Sokalofsky
Jake Sawa	Jasmine Gerein
Jenni Bernstein	Jessa Gauley
Jessica Trevors	Kelly Dierker
Megan Donald	Michaela Siourounis
Mojisola Tijani	Nicole Bayerle
Rheanne Gerwing	Sam Illerbrun
Sara Illerbrun	Shae-Lynn Kowaniuk
Stephanie Bailey	Tara Luzurko
Veronica Jack	

## Staff

### Bonnie Cummings-Vickaryous

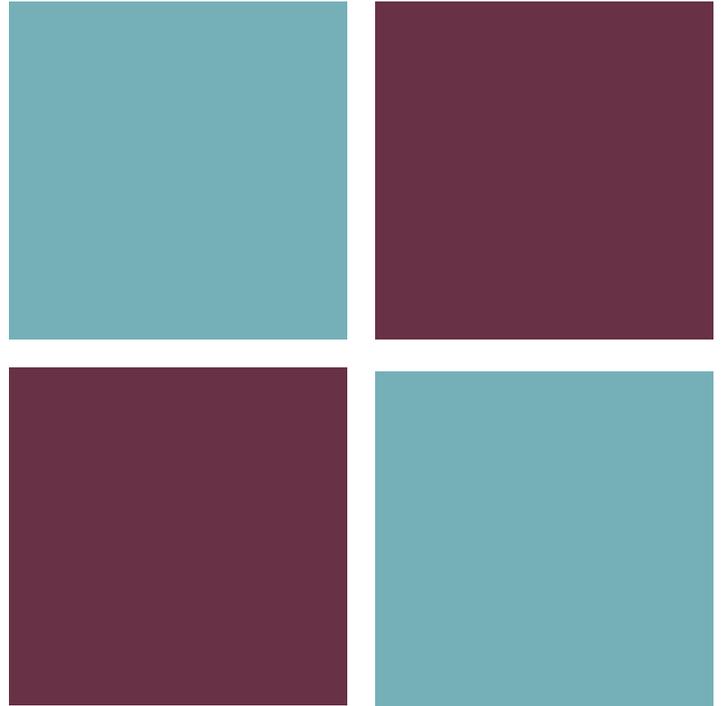
Bonnie moved to Regina, from Aylsham to pursue a degree from the University of Regina. In 2007 Bonnie convocated with a Bachelor of Kinesiology (dual Major in Adapted Physical Activity Studies and Recreation and Sport Administration). She is currently working towards a Masters of Science in Kinesiology. In addition to working with Astonished! Bonnie is a sessional instructor for the Faculty of Kinesiology and Health Studies and is Vice President of COR. Bonnie is committed to strengthening the disAbility community and working with young adults with complex physical disAbilities to identify and respond to their strengths, dreams and needs. Bonnie and her husband, James, have a four-year-old daughter Lauren and are expecting a second daughter at the end of August. In her spare time she enjoys spending time with her family at the lake.



### Ella McIntyre

Born in Winnipeg and raised in Regina, Ella attained a Bachelor of Arts degree majoring in English from the University of Regina. After a few wonderful experiences living abroad, Ella returned to Saskatchewan in search of a meaningful career, something that she has found at Astonished! in spades. For Ella, it is a pleasure and a privilege to help build inclusive community, and to build relationships with A! Core Members and their networks. Ella hopes to continue to learn and grow in her role as A! Program Coordinator and feels that there is so much to look forward to. In her spare time Ella likes to read, run, and enjoy the great outdoors.





## The Big Sky Centre for Learning and Being Astonished! Inc. Overview

The Big Sky Centre for Learning and Being Astonished! Inc. is a Registered Charity based in Regina, Saskatchewan. We work in **inclusive community** to address barriers facing young adults with complex physical disAbilities (Core Members) by creating opportunities for teaching and learning; social, recreational and cultural engagement; and for employment and housing.

The **Astonished Guiding Principles and Values**, developed in the early years, and always a work in progress, continue to guide us:

### Who we are and how we work together

- Astonished! focuses on **young adults** with complex physical disAbilities and **their particular place in a vibrant and diverse community**.
- Astonished! **celebrates creativity, capacity, diversity**.

- Astonished! believes that **inclusion is individual**, and starts with the dreams, strengths, and needs of the individual.
- For Astonished! inclusion means we are **better together**, and is always a work in progress.
- Astonished! **affirms interdependence**

### Astonished! Values Community

- Astonished! believes in building and nurturing **respectful, resilient community** and a culture of inclusion and respect.
- **Astonished!** works to **create spaces and places of belonging** where all ages, abilities, races, incomes, genders, and sexual orientations can offer their gifts and time, and receive the gifts and nurture of others through living, working and playing together.

- **Astonished! respects Earth and the natural world** which offers teachings about resilience, change, diversity, healing, and community that contribute to our vision and work.
- **Astonished! encourages and supports arts and artists.** We live out inclusion and accessibility in language and communication, facilities and activities, while we build and sustain the well-being of community.



### Consensus

- **Astonished!** respects our humanness; **we try our best, learn from mistakes**, and hang in with each other through rough times as well as easy times.
- **Astonished!** makes decision by **consultation and consensus**.

Currently, we offer four programs: the Astonished! Teaching and Learning Centre, the Astonished! Social Club, Path to Future Endeavors, and the Summer Literacy program. Please see pages 9 through 12 to learn more about our programs

**Our Numbers (April 1 2013- March 31, 2014)**

### We are:

- 35 Active Core Members
- 182 donors 2013-14.
- 320 E-Newsletter subscribers



# 2014-2015 Astonished Program Areas

## 1. The Astonished! Teaching and Learning Centre (A!TLC)

The A!TLC is a place where young adults with complex physical disAbilities become Student Researchers.



Established in January 2013 with 3 Student Researchers, A!TLC provides unique opportunities designed around each individual's particular strengths, dreams, and needs. Some dreams of the Student Researchers include 'becoming a fiction and non-fiction writer', 'learning new things to help me move forward in my life', 'being part of the university life', 'increasing employment related skills' 'self growth and discovery', 'having the opportunity to socialize with peers my age' and 'teaching others about the experience of disAbility'.

Astonished! staff support each Student Researcher as they determine and navigate a program PATH (Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope) unique to them. The work within A!TLC is designed around each Student Researcher's PATH and their identified strengths, dreams, and needs. In addition, Student Researchers are leaders and work with the university community in research, teaching, and delivering presentations about disAbility and inclusion.

A!TLC highlights and accomplishments from the 2014-2015 year include:

- recruiting and training 3 practicum students and numerous volunteers
- helping A! Dance Project instructor and Kinesiology student Jake Sawa develop his dance lessons by hosting him at the A!TLC
- partnering with 3 Engineering students to help them develop their fourth year final project, an electronic cup-holder
- participating in the Therapeutic Recreation (TR) Awareness Day at the U of R. Here, A!TLC Student Researchers showcased the great ways that they participate in different recreational activities of their choice
- contributing to a research project lead by A!TLC Student Researcher Kelsey Culbert and Social Work Professor Dr. Randy Johner
- taking part in numerous workshops led by Astonished! staff, practicum students, and Student Researchers
- working as mentors in a Social Work Class – SW 479 DisAbility Issues
- completing 1 PATH, 2 PATH updates, and 2 Strengths Dreams and Needs Interviews



## Astonished Program Areas Cont'd.

- supporting Student Researcher Kelsey C to audit a university course (Devising Inclusive Theatre)
- working with 3 Kinesiology students to develop and deliver adaptive technology lessons to local high school students
- maintaining a caring, safe, and supportive environment for each Student Researcher, Astonished! Staff, friends, and volunteers



We are looking forward to welcoming a 6<sup>th</sup> Student Researcher this Fall!

### 2. Summer Literacy

Astonished! is researching, developing, and delivering literacy services/programs specific to the strengths, dreams, and needs of Core Members.

In the summer of 2013 Astonished! offered a pilot program to explore and respond to the strengths, dreams, and needs of 5 Core Members. Some of their diverse literacy dreams included 'developing pre-literacy skills', 'enhancing existing skills', 'having more time to read and/or use various forms of technology', and 'increasing numeracy skills'.



In the summer of 2014, Astonished! once again offered a Literacy Program to explore and respond to the literacy strengths, dreams, and needs of our Core Members. This summer session had 7 students, with 1 student receiving one-on-one pre-literacy lessons, and 6 students receiving group lessons. We also had 1 Astonished! Core Member with us in a volunteer capacity. For additional support Astonished! hired a summer student to assist with developing and implementing the literacy program.

*The program is now offered annually July through August, 2 afternoons a week. We are happy to be offering this program again in summer 2015, welcoming 10 literacy students.*



# Astonished Program Areas Cont'd.

## 3. Astonished! Social Club

Astonished! works with a 5 member planning team (The Astonished! Leadership Team) comprised of vibrant young adults with and without complex physical disAbilities to plan and carry out monthly inclusive, social, recreational, and physically active events for the Astonished! Core Members, volunteers, and the wider community. Astonished! staff mentor this team to increase their leadership and program planning skills. The team actively recruits and orients university students (volunteers) to assist with event implementation.



Events take place at various local businesses and establishments, as well as at the University of Regina. These events provide a great avenue for building inclusive community as Core Members gather with and meet new friends, potential Core Members have a chance to join in on the fun and see what Astonished! is all about, and university students have a chance to be part of a community, form meaningful relationships, and gain valuable experience in inclusion.

Over the past year the monthly events offered by the Social Club included:

- Day at the Mall
- Pizza and a movie at the University
- Night at the Theatre
- Regina Red Sox games
- A! Summer BBQ
- A! Dance Project – Pilot Event
- A! Halloween Howl – a fundraising event
- Cougar Volleyball Games
- A! Holiday Feast
- A! Hawaiian Party
- A! Amazing Race at the U of R
- A! Winter Games



Through a few of these monthly events new partnerships were formed. The Astonished! Leadership Team partnered with the Sask Abilities SLYP-Out Program, as well as two excellent Kinesiology Students to offer our Amazing Race and Winter Games events.



## Astonished Program Areas Cont'd.



Following the success of the A! Dance Project, a pilot dreamed up by Jake Sawa and presented by the A! Leadership Team, the A! Dance Project has been offered monthly since September 2014. Jake writes

*What's your style? Dance is a wonderful medium through which we can let our spirits run wild. Everyone should have the opportunity to let loose and dance in whatever way the music moves them, regardless of musical taste or dance style. The rush that you feel when you get to close your eyes and move along to your favourite track can be just like magic.*

### 4. PATH To Future Endeavors

Astonished! is currently determining a way to learn more about Core Members strengths, dreams, and needs as they relate to vocation. Over the past year we have worked with 4 Core Members to begin supporting their vocation dreams:

- continuing to partner with a private organization to support the employment dreams of Core Member Ryan Ross who lives in Regina and is a resident at Wascana Rehabilitation Centre. Ryan holds the position of Astonished! Facebook Manager. With this position, Ryan is responsible for the content that appears on the Astonished! Facebook page
- contracting with the Astonished! Leadership Team to plan the monthly Social Club Events. For the 2014-2015 year, 3 Core Members were on the team
- Kelsey continues to add experience to her growing resume by serving on the Astonished! Program Advisory Committee. Here, Kelsey is learning skills related to leadership, strategic planning, decision making, and promotion
- Rebekah, also an Astonished! Core Member, enjoys helping others and is interested in leadership. Last summer, Rebekah supported Astonished! staff in a volunteer capacity with the Summer Literacy Program

# Astonished! & the University of Regina

Through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the **University of Regina**, Astonished! and the University collaborate on research and inclusion opportunities. This reciprocal partnership provides great opportunities for young adults with complex physical disAbilities and the U of R student body, faculty, and staff to learn from each other. We demonstrate a model for social inclusion in an accessible post-secondary education environment.

Over the past year Astonished! and the University have continued to work together to identify common areas of interest within the framework of the University of Regina's strategic plan, peyak aski kikawinaw and Astonished's mandate. This spring we successfully developed a new 5 year MOU. The MOU will see Astonished! and the University of Regina working together to:

- develop Inclusion Education workshops for students enrolled in the Faculties of Education, Social Work, Journalism, and Kinesiology and Health Studies;
- create, implement, and evaluate teaching, learning, and research opportunities related to social inclusion and other areas of mutual interest with students, staff, and faculty;
- create opportunities for students and faculty to increase their personal and professional capacities to learn, work, and play with people who experience disAbilities;
- ensure that the U of R is supportive in locating, confirming, and sustaining accessible physical campus space to be used by Astonished! for its programming

In line with the MOU, over the past year Astonished has welcomed and worked with multiple University of Regina placement students and volunteers. We are currently working with 2 University of Regina Faculty Members on 2 separate research projects and we have delivered multiple presentations in various university classes. This past semester one Student Researcher audited a university Course, Devising Inclusive Theatre.

## Fundraising

The Astonished! Board and Staff are responsible for raising the annual budget. Fundraising strategies for the past year included:

- 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Fall Grow Gratitude Campaign
- 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Halloween Howl (ticketed event)
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual 'Wings on our Wheels Astonished! in Flight' Spring Fundraising Gala
- Community Living Service Delivery Individual Support Contracts
- grant through the Community Initiative Fund
- foundation support
- general donations
- Permanent Endowment and Agency Flow Through Fund at SSCF
- Astonished! Legacy Program



## Fundraising Cont'd.

We invite you to help us reach our annual 2015-2016 goal of \$200,000.

General Donor options include:

1. **A Cheque and/or Series of Post-dated Cheques to Astonished! Inc.** mailed to The Big Sky Centre for Learning and Being Astonished! Inc., University of Regina, 3737 Wascana Parkway, Regina SK. S4S 0A2
2. **A Pre-Authorized Monthly Donation** (contact Bonnie, [BCV@beingastonished.com](mailto:BCV@beingastonished.com))
3. **An online donation through Canada Helps** (visit <http://www.beingastonished.com/donors/donation-options/>)
4. **A donation to our Permanent Endowment Fund** (Bonnie, [BCV@beingastonished.com](mailto:BCV@beingastonished.com))
5. **Astonished Legacy Program** (contact Ruth, [ruth.blaser@astonished.com](mailto:ruth.blaser@astonished.com))

Our Global Fundraising Committee has worked diligently to identify fundraising strategies for the upcoming fiscal year. Keep your eye on our website, E-Newsletter, and your email.

## Astonished Goals 2013 - March 30 2015 Update

In March of 2013, 19 members from the Astonished! Community gathered to review and celebrate accomplishments and to identify key goals to strengthen Astonished! in a time of growth. From this meeting multiple goals were born to take us to spring 2015.

### Program Goals

#### Astonished! Teaching and Learning Centre (A!TLC)

1. The A!TLC will grow to a maximum number of 12 Student Researchers over the next 4-5 years (2018)

*The Program Advisory Committee will continue to monitor and discuss the growth of the A!TLC.*

2. The A!TLC Steering Committee together with the Board will develop a clear, fair, and transparent process for application, selection, and welcoming to the A!TLC

*Completed Spring 2015*

3. The A!TLC will welcome one more Student Researcher in the fall of 2013

*Astonished welcomed two Core Members as A!TLC Student Researchers in the fall of 2013.*

4. The A!TLC will consider welcoming an additional Student Researcher in early 2014

*Astonished! is welcoming a 6<sup>th</sup> Student Researcher fall 2015.*

## **Literacy**

1. Astonished! will develop competencies in Literacy Services for people with complex physical disAbilities over the next five years

*Astonished continues to develop and refine skills in this area.*

2. Astonished! will research, develop, and deliver Literacy Programs/services specific to the needs, dreams, and interests of Core Members

*Astonished offered a pilot literacy project summer 2013. We offered the program again in Summer 2014 and will offer it for a 3<sup>rd</sup> time this coming summer.*

3. Astonished! will offer a summer pilot literacy program in the summer of 2013 to begin identifying and exploring the needs, dreams and interests of program participants. The pilot project will be open to a maximum of 5 core members

*Astonished offered the pilot program to 5 Core Members summer 2013.*

4. At the conclusion and evaluation of the summer pilot literacy program Astonished! Staff will make recommendations to the board for future literacy programming

*The literacy program has become an Annual summer program.*

## **Employment Readiness Programs**

1. Astonished! will continue to research and work with the Core Members to identify needed services to support the employment dreams and needs of the Core Membership

*The Board of Directors with input from Astonished! staff have made the decision to support a few Core Members with their vocation dreams. When our capacity increases, we will look to expand the PATH to Future Endeavors program area.*

2. Astonished will continue to contract a 5 member team (the Astonished! Leadership Team) to plan, implement and evaluate a monthly social and recreational, leisure, cultural event for the Astonished! membership and community

*Each year, Astonished! continues to contract a 5 member team to plan and implement the Social Club program (under the mentorship of the Astonished! Program Coordinator). For the 2014-2015 fiscal year, 3 Core Members served on the team.*

## **Social Club**

1. Monthly social/recreational events will be planned, implemented and evaluated by the Astonished Leadership team for the Astonished! membership and community

*12 monthly events were planned and implemented during the 2014-2015 fiscal year.*

2. Astonished! will continue to explore and identify the social and recreational needs of the membership and work to meet these needs through the Social Club

During the 2014-2015 fiscal year, through the Social Club, Astonished! offered the A! Dance Project which is now a monthly event in addition to the regular monthly Social Club offering.

### **Additional Programming**

1. Astonished will explore interest, needs and possibilities for additional programming to be offered as early as summer 2014 (recreation, housing, literacy, employment etc.)

*Working within our current capacity and to ensure sustainability we have not increased program offerings.*

### **Teaching, Learning and Research**

1. Astonished! will continue to develop capacity and expertise in teaching and learning

Over the past two years Astonished has worked with numerous practicum student and volunteers, Student Researchers have worked as Mentors in a Social Work class, we have delivered lectures focusing on various disAbility issues as well as participated in workshops. As we engage in each opportunity we continue to develop our capacity and refine our expertise.

2. Astonished! will explore pathways to promote and profile its growing expertise and competencies

Astonished continues to strive to identify and explore additional ways to profile our growing expertise. Student Researchers deliver presentations, we engage in research, and this fall we will be presenting at a conference.

3. Astonished! will identify and begin projects in areas of research for 2013-2015

*We are currently engaged in two research projects..*

### **Budget, Finance, Fund-Raising**

1. A Finance Committee will be established by June 2013 to further hone the Astonished! budget and to develop budget tracking and reporting processes

A finance committee was established in 2013 and now meets monthly.

2. A Fundraising Committee will be established by June 2013. This committee will work to ensure that Astonished! Income sources become more stable, sturdy and predictable

A fundraising committee was established and meets regularly to identify fundraising strategies for each fiscal year.

3. Astonished! will continue to widen and build the Astonished! donor base

### **University of Regina and Community Partnerships**

1. Astonished! will continue to grow the partnership with the University of Regina.
  - i. In consultation with University of Regina Administration and various Faculties, Astonished! will continue to further identify and develop opportunities related to accessible post-secondary education and social inclusion
  - ii. Astonished! will continue to work with the University of Regina Administration, the A!/University of Regina Working Group, Student Accessibility Services, Campus for All, The Presidents Office, and the Faculties of Education, Kinesiology and Health Studies and Social Work. In addition Astonished! will invite participation from other University of Regina Faculties and departments
  - iii. Astonished! will renew and make more specific the Memorandum of Understanding between the University of Regina and The Big Sky Centre for Learning and Being Astonished! Inc
  - iv. Astonished! will Work with the University of Regina at various levels to develop a three year plan for dedicated office and classroom/meeting space for Astonished! staff and programs at the U of R

*Since 2013 Astonished has worked to grow and solidify the partnership between the University of Regina and Astonished!. We recently entered into a new 5 year MOU taking us into 2019.*

2. Astonished! will continue to widen and grow the Astonished! Community
  - i. Astonished! will increase its public profile locally, and beyond
  - ii. Astonished! will explore mutually beneficial relationships with other local and provincial community based organizations

Over the past two years we have worked to increase our community profile. We continue to introduce ourselves to and work with other community based organizations. In the 2014-2015 year we secured a contract with Community Living Service Delivery for the 2015-2016 fiscal year.

### **Administration and Planning**

1. Astonished! will stay true to Astonished! Vision and Values

*In everything we do we keep the Astonished! Vision and Values in the forefront.*

2. Astonished! will stabilize current program initiatives before adding new ones

Over the past two years we have worked to ensure the A!TLC and Social Club were stable and flourishing. Over the past two years we introduced the Summer Literacy program and dabbled in PATH to Future Endeavors.

3. Astonished! will plan carefully and thoughtfully for what Astonished! will pursue

Always

4. Astonished! will plan for the possibilities of contracting program and administrative work

Always

5. Create clear and detailed job descriptions, outlining the responsibilities and requirements of all Astonished! Board of Connector, staff and contract positions

Complete

6. Develop Performance Evaluation protocol and forms for Astonished! staff positions

Complete

7. Develop policy and procedure manuals for the Board of Connectors and Astonished! staff

In progress

8. Astonished! will further engage with the U of R Faculties by considering taking on practicum students where there is a good fit and opportunities are mutually beneficial

We have taken on at least one placement student each semester since Fall 2013.

9. In September 2013, Astonished! will take on a practicum student from the Faculty of Social Work to help carry out the general work of Astonished!

Complete

10. Recruit volunteers and develop training, support and accountability processes

### **Housing**

1. In 2014 Astonished! will start working with Student Researchers and Core members to address their housing needs

First steps will include:

1. Developing individual housing PATH(s)
2. Building community alliances and partnerships
3. Advocating for funding support for housing

Ongoing



**ASTONISHED!**  
BETTER TOGETHER



## Contact Information

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