

In the beginning

In the mid-sixties Walter Paetkau was working for the Mennonite Conference. His assignment: organize activities for churches to get involved in. An ad-hoc committee of pastors and volunteer group representatives get things started. In 1969, MSA Community Services is organized as a society. A small office opened above James Fraser TV on Essendene, staffed by volunteers.

The prominent players in those early days:

- Father Paul Foran of St. Ann's Catholic Church
- Rev. Bob Pollock of Calvin Presbyterian Church
- Lloyd Wilson, a local lawyer
- Mauritz Vanderveen, District supervisor of welfare
- Peter Adrian, mental health worker
- Dr. John Buirs & Dr. John Krahn



Abbotsford Community & Services

"People Helping People"

10
Years

1969 - 1979 Defining and Emerging

October 1969 – **Community Services explained to Sumas** Walter Paetkau & Tom Farrell appear before Sumas Council to explain the role of community services. Farrell sums it all up by saying, “what we are really trying to do is help people help themselves.”

September 1975 – **MSA Community Services moves into the former Pentecostal Tabernacle on Montrose**

June 1976 – **Community legal service is praised** – Abbotsford's legal services clinic, a branch of Community Services, is being recognized throughout the province by the legal profession as a model for providing legal services to people on low and fixed incomes.

Mid - late 70's – **family services, youth and counseling programs added**

Late 70's – **multicultural services & recycling depot added**

20
Years

1979 - 1989 Rapid Growth - Coming of Age

1984 – **Multicultural services available** – Aim of multicultural services was to improve race relations and promote inter-cultural understanding. “Translating school documents from Greek to English and interpreting at hospital bedsides are just two of the ways the Language Bank has been helping area residents.”

October 1985 – **Popularity of recycling is growing, product up 60%**

October 1986 – **As many as 900 people pass through the doors of the Mat.-Abb. Food Bank each month** – For most it is an experience they would rather not repeat. Many are well-educated, well-read, and well-informed.

Late 80's – **Alcohol & Drug Outreach programs & English classes for adults begin**

30
Years

1989 - 1999 Age of Uncertainty

October 1990 – **Street Workers needed to deal with problems** – According to Matsqui Abbotsford Community Services Family Services program coordinator Doyle Clifton, “a small group of young people, some as young as 12, are involved in prostitution, drug dealing, theft and other crimes.”

June 1992 – **New Beginnings** – Last year Dawn was a single mom on welfare with a grade 8 education. This week she picked up her high school diploma and an Abbotsford Kiwanis Club Scholarship. She is one of 16 young mothers in the 2nd graduating class of New Beginnings.

May 1996 – **ACS on the Move** – Abbotsford Community Services moves programs into the Old Courthouse building.

40
Years

1999 - 2009 Gains and Losses

June 2000 – **Paetkau steps down after 30 years** – Thelma Schrock becomes new Executive Director

August 2005 – **Precious Times At Family Centre** – It's a change to connect with lots of different new parents, share stories and concerns, and celebrate milestones achieved

February 2008 – **Helping Immigrant Families Settle Through Schools** – This service opens the door to let families (and the school) ask questions and express concerns. It's to the advantage of everyone.

January 2008 – **Free Dental Clinic Fills a Need** – the 4-seat clinic (at the Community Services Food Bank) is staffed by local dentists who volunteer their time.

...and over the last 40 years,
headlines from local newspapers
have told the story best



November 1971 – **Christmas Bureau 1971**
Your questions answered

April 1986 – **Language Bank: volunteer assistance in 22 languages**

October 1994 – **Parenting is wonderful**
A series of programs to help meet the challenge of this busy lifestyle of the 90's

April 2001 – **Volunteers continue to make a significant impact**