

From Shelter to Housing

Move out days—when shelter residents move out of their shelter pod and into a permanent housing unit—are special ones. Last year, we helped place 18 residents into long-term housing. On move out days, Stephanie Kallstrom, Case Planner, along with a shelter resource worker, help the resident pack up their belongings and drive them to their new home. They then present them with a housewarming package that includes toiletries, socks, pillows, and a special gift.

“We present quilts [made by members of St. John’s United Church] to clients in their new unit and they love it,” Stephanie shared.

As Case Planner, Stephanie helps find long-term housing for shelter residents and assists with the application and transition process.

While we work to house as many people as soon as possible, there are only a few units available in the area every month, and even then, the competition is tight. Monthly meetings with BC Housing allow us to collaborate on priority residents. Sometimes it’s just the luck of the draw when we have a person who is perfect for an available unit. Buildings have mandates, for example, some may require 50% of residents to be Indigenous and 10% gender-diverse people.

“We have 51 people in our shelter, maybe only seven on the priority list,” Stephanie said. High priority residents are extra vulnerable people, including those fleeing from abuse, people who’ve had multiple evictions and are hard to house, gender-diverse and trans folks, and those who have been at the shelter for over a year. Her process includes looking at the list of priority residents to see who would be best suited for the available units.

“It can be tough because not all buildings are appropriate for some of our residents.” For example, a building without elevators would not be suitable for a resident in a wheelchair.



When shelter residents move into a long-term housing unit, we give them a special housewarming package that includes a quilt made by members of St. John’s United Church.

When Stephanie sees a unit that would work well for a resident, she helps them fill out the required paperwork, including a Supportive Housing Registry (SHR) application and an assessment form.

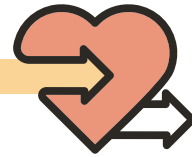
If the housing provider decides that an applicant is a good fit, Stephanie will then coach the resident in preparation for the interview process. While interviews aren’t always necessary for supportive housing, they’re often a step when applying for high-barrier buildings such as self-contained units that have their own kitchen and bathroom.

“Housing retention is high for us because we make sure that when we put residents up for housing, it’s the right fit for them,” Stephanie explained. “We want to avoid placing someone in a situation where they might get evicted because the experience of becoming homeless again can be very traumatizing.”

Thankfully, this year has been a good one for housing residents. New units are freshly available, and we’re optimistic about more folks finding long-term housing.

We look forward to more move out days where we can present residents with a housewarming package that includes that special gift that everyone loves: a handmade quilt.

Actualizing Our Vision



Dear Friends,

Imagine with me, a neighbourhood where everyone's worth is celebrated and all people thrive.

I know it can be hard to imagine in our current climate. Homelessness has increased by 32% since 2020, according to the latest Greater Vancouver Homeless Count. The overdose crisis is still causing one to two deaths a day in the Downtown Eastside. Every day, our frontline staff stand as witnesses to the racialization and criminalization of poverty. It's hard to imagine another way.

But I can imagine that neighbourhood where everyone's worth is celebrated and all people can thrive. A neighbourhood where poverty is destigmatized and where, as a collective, we are helping lift people out of poverty. I can imagine a neighbourhood where people experience dignity, belonging and justice.

And I know you can, too. I believe that you wouldn't be reading this newsletter and standing with us if you couldn't imagine it.

We believe in this neighbourhood. That's why we show up every day and do the work we do, providing

essential services on the frontlines and working to change systems through our public advocacy. That's why we're building a new community-informed facility on Gore and Hastings that will allow us to expand programs and offer seven storeys of below-market rental housing.

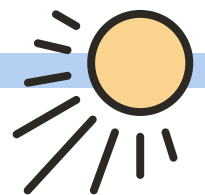
We won't give up on the DTES. Whether that's helping people in our shelter find long-term housing, or installing climate resilient systems in our new building, or incorporating art into our spaces to help folks feel at home—we won't give up until there is dignity, belonging, and justice for all.

Whatever it takes to get there, and whatever that looks like, we can't do it without you. So, thank you for supporting us and standing with the DTES community.

Amanda Burrows,
Executive Director



Planning for Climate Resiliency



When planning the design of our new building, we couldn't ignore the current and future effects of climate change, especially considering the impact that we want the building to have in the Downtown Eastside for generations to come.

Extreme weather like intense rain and flooding, severe cold snaps, oppressive heat domes, and wildfire smoke poses health risks for unsheltered community members. That's why we made conscious decisions to incorporate climate resiliency into the design of the new building.

To deal with extreme temperatures, our new building will include a state-of-the-art HVAC system on the ground floor, which will allow it to serve as an official warming and cooling centre for up to 200 people. The temperature features will be accessible to community members, so they can seek refuge in what will be our entry hall, reception area, drop-in space, and dining hall. Our building will also have solar shading and a highly insulated building envelope to support energy efficiency and temperature control.

In the event of wildfire smoke, the system's enhanced air circulation and filtration will enable our building to serve as a refuge for up to 470 people in the cooling centre, day sleeping room, sacred space, and several other rooms on levels two and three.

This Place for Displaced



When folks come to us for shelter, we want them to feel welcome and that they belong. That was the idea behind commissioning artwork for our shelter—to make it feel more like a home and less like an institution.


To achieve this, we commissioned a piece by Downtown Eastside artist Rickie “Sugars” that now hangs over the reception desk. The painting, titled “This Place for Displaced” is made with acrylic paint, ink and spray paint.

Describing the intention behind the piece, Sugars shared: “SCRUB is what I call my style, it’s spontaneous, sporadic, loose gestured sketches. It’s scribbles and smear, and I create fast, crazy, colourful, almost channeled compositions. Rudimentary rhythm and reason, unorthodox unconscious unity that’s unique. I use basic balanced bright colors with bold black lines to begin with. It is influenced by music with inner city culture, skateboarding, the performing arts, cubism, surrealism, animation and mostly graffiti.

The idea that I wanted to express with the design was to show a place where people can come together and be safe. People who feel displaced, disregarded, disconnected. People who feel detached and are disconnected from family and friends and have been beaten, bullied, or abused. People who have been left in a ditch, driven over, and discarded like garbage. People born at a disadvantage who, through poverty and substance use, mental health and disease, can come together and feel safe, secure, and cared about. I use multiple elements of how the city can be chaotic, over-stimulating and busy from all the commotion. I want people to leave that outside and bring everyone together in one place.”

The DTES has long been home to many artists, with its rich history of cultural and social expressions through various art mediums. For many DTES artists, art has been credited with having the power to save lives.



 Downtown Eastside artist Rickie “Sugars” (centre) holds his artwork “This Place for Displaced” with Lauren Sanders, Indigenous Spiritual Care Chaplain (left), and Stephanie Kallstrom, Case Planner (right) at our shelter.

“Community art was a no brainer because we should support our community on all sorts of levels and that includes commissioned art,” said Stephanie Kallstrom, Case Planner at the shelter, who organized the process of commissioning the piece.

Stephanie was drawn to Sugars’ abstract and colourful style when she attended an art show at City Motor Motel. After sharing examples of his work with Keely Hale, Director of Community Services, they agreed to give him complete autonomy to create a large piece for the shelter.

“Everyone was ecstatic about it,” Stephanie shared. “This painting, you can look at it every single day and see something different. It’s uplifting, cheerful but also has elements of darkness, at least in my perception. I wholeheartedly believe that community art is unique, and we need to spend our money in community.”

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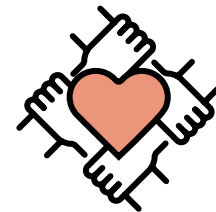


**FIRST
UNITED**

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Vancouver BC Canada V6A 1P4

*Located on unceded Xʷməθkʷəy̓əm
(Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish),
& Səlíl̓wətaʔ (Tsleil-Waututh) lands.*

Celebrating the Impact of our Law Reform Work



When the BC Government announced Bill 14, the Tenancy Statutes Amendment Act, which has now passed third reading, we were pleased to see the impact of our public advocacy and law reform work.

We had been advocating for stronger tenant protections through our law reform platform “Everyone Needs a Home: Solutions for Preventing Homelessness, Evictions, and Displacement”, released in February of this year, as well as through our petition with 600 signatures calling on Housing Minister Ravi Kahlon to prioritize the reduction of bad faith evictions.

The Bill’s proposed amendments to the Residential Tenancy Act addressed several of the recommendations outlined in our law reform platform. Some highlights include landlords being required to use a web portal to create Notices to End Tenancy for personal occupancy; and the dispute deadline for tenants who receive “landlord’s use” eviction notices increasing from 15 days to 30 days. We’re encouraged to see the results of our work take form. This couldn’t have been achieved without our supporters, the people who shared their eviction stories with us, and those who signed the petition.

But we know there’s still work to do. We will continue to advocate for evidence-based policy changes to prevent homelessness and displacement because housing is a human right.



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