

PORTRAITS OF SUCCESS HAYLEE

Prior to entering a treatment program, Haylee lived for many years on the streets, including in the Kelowna area. “Years of suffering and barely surviving, and years of acting tougher on the outside than I felt on the inside, ended when my boyfriend was killed in front of me,” Haylee told us. Once in Victoria, Haylee lived in a youth transition house. Following a relapse, she found her way into a treatment program. It was when she was in treatment that a social worker suggested she attend the Digital Job Seekers workshop offered by Our WorkPlace. Once there she was told about the People in Progress program, into which she was accepted. Haylee is quick to tell you that she found it hard to attend workshops every day, but she quickly settled into a routine. Ultimately, the program helped her get ready for being hired into a job. “I’m so glad I signed up for the program,” she told us.

As part of her participation in People In Progress, Haylee completed a work placement at AIDS Vancouver Island (AVI), where she did five weeks of outreach and worked with several teams. She felt comfortable working with the teams because they accepted that she was bringing her own knowledge of life on the streets to the work she was doing. When Haylee’s placement ended, one of the managers at AVI allowed her to continue working in a volunteer capacity. Shortly thereafter,

she was encouraged to apply for a permanent position with the organization. “I had my first REAL interview then, which was super hard for me,” she told us, but ultimately, she got the position she wanted. These days, Haylee works with the Drop-in team, which focuses on helping the unhoused access to supports, access to AVI’s overdose prevention site, and even coffee and a snack. “It’s such important work and the organization continues to make me feel

like I have a new world around me, full of real honest and genuinely good-hearted people that want the same change in the world as I do,” she says.

When asked how her past experiences have impacted her life, Haylee told us that her friends

have told her that the knowledge she gained from being on the streets is incredibly valuable to the work she now does. She’s learned not to question if she’s capable and those around her continue to encourage her and help her get past her own self-doubts. What’s more, Haylee now has a home of her own, which she’s decorated just as she’s always wanted, and a cat to cuddle up to.

SO WHAT’S NEXT FOR HAYLEE?

Haylee is currently writing a book about her life, entitled “Laughing in Desperation” which she hopes to share with as many people as possible to encourage them to take a closer look at what it’s like to be homeless and all the trauma, danger, pain, and even good times that come with it all. As she says, “To remember everything I went through seems absolutely unbelievable.” “I just really hope to make a difference in the lives of these wonderful human beings we serve and let them know I care about them and love them no matter what.”

You’re on your way, Haylee, and we couldn’t be prouder of all you’ve accomplished!



IN THIS ISSUE

2. PEOPLE IN PROGRESS Final Report

Shift

SEEDS

3. Vee’s Corner

Indigenous drum-making workshop

4. Milestones

NOTE TO READERS:

This newsletter is produced by Our WorkPlace volunteers, with input from staff, clients, and supporters.

PEOPLE IN PROGRESS THE FINAL REPORT IS IN

A Under the terms of a contract with the provincial Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction, from November 2021 to October 2022, Our WorkPlace successfully provided four intakes of the People In Progress training program with between six and eight eligible participants in each group. The workshop series consisted of six weeks of essential employability and occupational skills training, plus four weeks of on-the-job work experience and two weeks of follow-up support by staff to prepare each participant to re-enter the work force as an entry level service sector worker.

The contract with the ministry was extended, and from October 2022 to March 2023, Our WorkPlace provided an additional two intakes with the same number of eligible participants for six weeks of essential employability skills and occupational skills, five weeks of on-the-job work experience and one week of follow-up support.

In their final report on the program, Ministry staff commended Our WorkPlace on its management and implementation of project activities and in dealing with any issues arising. Furthermore, there are strong indications that they would contract again with Our Place/Our WorkPlace in the future.



“I couldn’t be more appreciative of the support Our WorkPlace received from the Ministry, which allowed us to deliver the People In Progress workshop series during the past two years,” says program manager, Ashley McDonald. “I am also proud of all of our graduates, who put in the hard work and trusted us to guide them through a process towards becoming employable once again.”

HERE ARE A FEW KEY FACTS ABOUT THE SUCCESS OF THE PEOPLE IN PROGRESS PROGRAM:

217

individuals were assessed for the program between September 2021 and March 2023.

24

participants (out of 39) graduated (62%).

20

of the 39 participants are employed (52%).

75%

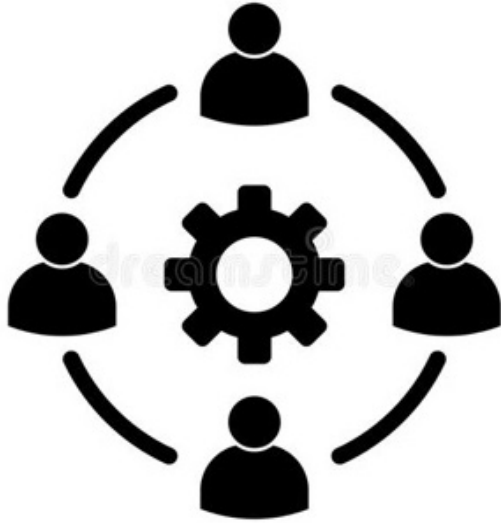
of all participants completed the workshop series.

Relationships with

15

local employers were created.

SHIFT - A COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH PROJECT



Just prior to the COVID-10 pandemic, Our WorkPlace's manager, Ashley, was contacted by a representative of EMBERS East-side Works, an income-generating hub in the Downtown East-side neighbourhood of Vancouver. The purpose of the contact was to determine if there might be a benefit to having Our WorkPlace, along with other pre-employment providers collaborate to effect change when it comes to better meeting the needs of people with disabilities in BC. With funding from the Ministry of Post-secondary Education and Future Skills, EMBERS has embarked on a 14-month research project with seven other service agencies in BC. For its part, Our WorkPlace will prepare three to five case studies on its own clients to follow their progress. The hope is that these case studies will provide hard data in terms of what is missing from current funding models. "I am very grateful that Our WorkPlace has an opportunity to collaborate with EMBERS in the important research work they're doing to address specific gaps in programming for people with disabilities in BC," says program manager, Ashley McDonald.

SHIFT & EXPLORE EMPLOYMENT DEVELOPMENT SKILLS (SEEDS) SOWING THE "SEEDS" OF A MORE HOPEFUL FUTURE!

In collaboration with staff at all the housing locations run by Our Place Society, staff from Our WorkPlace will soon be facilitating on-site short, weekly workshops on resume building, job search, mock interviews, employee rights, and workplace etiquette. The goal of the SEEDS workshops is to change the mindset of clients when it comes to employment and employability. "These workshops will be an important part of the overall experience of Our Place Society clients and family members," according to Ashley McDonald, manager of Our WorkPlace. "Whether they are coming into our community spaces for shelter or a cup of coffee, they will also have a chance to learn something new." The success of this new initiative will be measured by workshop participants themselves who ask for additional training in specific areas. More information on the SEEDS initiative will be available soon.



VEE'S CORNER

In this edition of the newsletter, I set out to write about the importance of a résumé (and all-important cover letter) and a job interview. But, if you're a graduate of one of our People In Progress programs, you know all of that. So, without taking away from the necessity of having a good résumé and knowing how to interview for a job, I thought I'd share this humorous take on them!

Vee

INTERVIEWER:

"How would you describe yourself?"

ME: "Verbally, but I've also prepared a dance."

INDIGENOUS DRUM-MAKING WORKSHOP

We recently had the opportunity to observe an Indigenous drum-making and decorating workshop in which some of the clients of Our WorkPlace have participated. The workshops were arranged through Our Place Society volunteer, Joseph, who in turn connected staff to Tobias at the Oasis Society for Spiritual Health. The workshops were facilitated by Lesa (a Mi'kmaq from Cape Breton) and Maureen (a Carrier from Fraser Lake).

On the day in question, we watched Patrick and Robert, two graduates of the People In Progress workshop series, decorating their drums. During the workshop, we learned that the hide for the drums comes from elk on Vancouver Island. The hides are soaked and then stretched onto cedar wood rounds and fastened with leather sinews. The drums are then left to dry for



Robert



Patrick

48 hours before being decorated with acrylic paint. When we asked Lesa and Maureen about the significance of beating the drums, they explained that it comes from “mothers” and the first beating heart a child hears.



Lesa



Workshop with Maureen



MILESTONES

Congratulations to Our WorkPlace manager, Ashley, who has been with us for 5 years! Sadly, Ashley's anniversary has been overtaken by the emergency eviction order from the RidgeView Place apartments in Langford, which directly affected her and her family. Ashley, we hope you will be quickly and happily re-settled in your new home. We are so grateful for your leadership at WorkPlace!

Look for more news about the achievements of Our WorkPlace staff and clients in future issues of Hire Ground.