



Uncertain and Unstable Times

By Julian Daly, Our Place CEO

These are uncertain and unstable times in our country. When times are tough in society as a whole, they tend to get even tougher for those we serve at Our Place. And the people we serve are no strangers to uncertainty and instability at the best of times.

THAT'S WHY IT'S SO IMPORTANT FOR EVERYONE TO HAVE A REFUGE, A PORT IN THE STORM, INCLUDING THOSE WE SERVE.

For many of us, we find comfort in our own home and friends and family. But, for hundreds of people every day, that place is Our Place.

It's a common misconception that Our Place facilities are unsafe or unhappy places to be. If you've visited, you already know that isn't the case. In fact, we pride ourselves on the warm, safe, and welcoming atmosphere we can provide to those who need it most, when they need it most.

Whether it's coming in for a coffee and a few hours of rest in the warm community center, attending regular programs and mealtimes, or staying full-time in one of our supportive housing and shelter facilities – Our Place is that port in a storm.

I've also often heard it said in the community that Our Place is only for people experiencing homelessness. While it's true that many people we serve are unhoused or living in unstable housing situations, it's just as common to meet someone at one of our facilities who does have housing, but who is going through tough times, maybe coming for a meal because they are struggling to make ends meet, or coming for company and community because they are lonely and isolated. Every person who walks through our doors has a unique pathway to navigate. Our Place is there to provide support and guidance along the way, whatever that might look like.

The Easter and Spring season is an important time for Our Place, traditionally a time of new life and renewed hope. Our Place always has hope to offer but this year, in what may feel like an increasingly hopeless world, we have more than ever. We are providing meaningful employment through the launch of Your Place (see more at www.yourplacevictoria.ca), a social enterprise landscaping business by Our Place, and celebrating the opening of the 20 bed New

Roads Therapeutic Recovery Community for Women, the only long-term women's treatment and recovery program on the Island.

These initiatives, effectively complementing what we already do, represent real, lasting change and a pathway of hope—offering people the chance to rebuild their lives with dignity, support, and community.

Our Place is resilient. A place where we seek to bring hope to those without it, a place of refuge. A place to be relied on.

If you're not already, we'd like to invite you today to become a part of the Our Place community. If you are, I thank you for making it what it is. Visit our website at www.ourplacesociety.com to learn more or share Our Place with a friend.

Join us in making sure everyone in our region has safe refuge. Because though times are hard, it is **together** that we will find the hope and strength to weather any storm.

Julian Daly
Our Place CEO



To donate to Our Place Society, please visit us at:
ourplacesociety.com/donate,
call **250-940-5060**, or email
donors@ourplacesociety.com

TV SCENE INSIDE

Who uses Our Place services? Meet Debra Bell



Debra Bell at Beauty Day.

And the first step on that journey is a meal. The Our Place community centre on Pandora is so much more than a place to find a hot meal. Debra Bell knows this better than anyone.

"I come for the camaraderie," says Debra. She can often be seen in the dining room at meal time, connecting over a hot lunch with other seniors.

Debra was born and raised in Alert Bay, and her family is Kwakwaka'wakw. Though she regrets that their

language was lost, she remains deeply connected to her culture, expressing it through her beautiful traditional art. She fondly recalls growing up with her parents and grandparents in the small fishing village and witnessing how Alert Bay grew as other Indigenous communities lost access to teachers and

medical professionals. By the time she was raised, the Potlatch ban had been lifted, but her grandparents and parents still carried the painful memories of systemic discrimination and trauma.

Debra's career began as an intake officer for the welfare office in Campbell River, later leading her to work with the ministry in Haida Gwaii. Over the years, she remained deeply connected to her community, serving in social services, childcare, libraries, and other support roles. In 1996, she earned her degree in social work, solidifying her lifelong dedication to helping others.

"I think that's why I'm attracted to Our Place. They're really good people," she says.

Debra married and had two sons. Her husband struggled with heart disease from a young age, and at just three years old, her eldest son was diagnosed with a severe heart defect. He underwent three open-heart surgeries at BC Children's Hospital, but during a family trip to Vancouver, he passed away at only 11 years old. Just five years later, Debra's husband collapsed in downtown Victoria and died in her arms.



Traditional Art by Debra Bell.

"I was a bird with a broken wing after that," she says.

Today, Debra faces significant health challenges, relying on a wheelchair and oxygen. For a time, she depended on her younger son for care, but as it became too much for him to manage, she sought external support. Though grateful to have housing, she lives alone and struggles to access the medical and social services she needs. Cooking for herself is difficult—when she can afford groceries.

"When I get my pension, I pay my rent, my hydro, everything—there isn't much left for food," she explains.

The first time she was referred to Our Place was just for a meal to ease this strain.

"I had spaghetti, a nice meal. Then I realized, you could go there any time," she says. "The volunteers, the staff, the people, they are all so nice to us."

As time went on, Debra made friends and started exploring other programs offered by Our Place. She regularly spends time with the 55+ group and uses Our Place foot care services to maintain her foot health thanks to volunteer nurses. Recently, she attended Our Place's Beauty Day – a special day at Our Place with haircuts and manicures donated by local professionals.

"I just can't get over that Beauty Day," she says, smiling widely. She still sports the fresh haircut from the day and speaks fondly of the manicure and make-up. But, mostly she was happy to spend the time with her fellow women.

"I'm meeting so many elderly [people], especially women, who don't have homes," she says of her friends at Our Place. One of the fastest growing groups in need of support, many seniors experiencing poverty, homelessness, and isolation seek support at Our Place.

"It's a community that none of us has otherwise. It's got heart. It gives me hope."

You can provide meals, and so much more, to people in our city today with a donation at www.ourplacesociety.com/donate



Debra gets a haircut by stylists from the Natural Salon.



Hearty meals bring smiles to the faces of those Our Place serves.



Annual Easter meal brings joy at Our Place.



Provide meals every day at Our Place.

More than a meal: the importance of Easter at Our Place

For people experiencing homelessness, poverty, or other physical and mental health challenges, getting food can be a challenge. That's why Our Place serves over 42,000 meals every month and is open every day of the year to anyone in need. These meals are specially planned to be nutritious, balanced, and accessible.

But beyond subsistence, meals are also a source of joy and connection. Holidays are a time when anyone in need can come to Our Place's Community Centre on Pandora for an extra special meal. Not only does no one need to be alone on a holiday, they can find comfort, hope, and belonging alongside the hearty fare at Our Place.

As a time of renewal and growth, Easter is a special time at the Our Place Community Centre. For so many, accessing Our Place services is a second chance. They celebrate every year with a hot and delicious meal of turkey, potatoes, gravy, roasted vegetables - and pie too!

And beyond the day being special for people regularly relying on Our Place, holiday meals are shared and talked about widely, bringing in hundreds of people who may not have otherwise walked through their doors. Once inside, people in need find one-on-one guidance from outreach workers, clean clothing, hygiene services, referrals to addiction recovery and housing, and so much more.

Meal programs are 100% funded by donation. Visit www.ourplacesociety.com/



Turkey with all the fixings for Easter.

**Donate to
provide hot,
nourishing
meals through
Our Place this
Easter.**



Hygiene supplies and hot showers are always available at Our Place.



Donate now and choose 'monthly' at www.ourplacesociety.com/donate



Emergency medical care saves lives.

Subscribe to a Better Community with Our Place

Have you been looking for a sustainable way to provide support for the people in need in our region?

By becoming an Our Place Community Builder with a monthly donation of any size, you create a sustainable fund that ensures a foundation of support that changes lives every day.

Let's make 2025 a year of hope and transformation. Even a small monthly contribution can help Our Place:

- Keep our hygiene facilities stocked with essentials like hot showers, clean clothing, and personal care items
- Provide skilled paramedics for life-saving emergency medical care
- Plan and source nutritious ingredients for the thousands of meals served each month
- Expand long-term recovery, shelter, and employment programs that provide individuals a real opportunity to regain stability and independence

Will you join us?

Visit www.ourplacesociety.com/donate and choose 'monthly' or scan the QR code now!