

A GUIDE TO OUR VALUES & PRINCIPLES

# YOUR STORY IS OUR STORY

A collection of short stories that  
celebrate the caring culture of WJS

**wjs** Canada  
strength in people

Integrity, Passion, Accountability, Quality, Teamwork



## STRENGTH IN PEOPLE— INSPIRING OUR WORK TOGETHER

This culture guide shares some of WJS Canada's best stories—stories that exemplify the values that we stand for in our work: Accountability, Integrity, Passion, Quality, and Teamwork.

These stories are a window into the beautiful, caring culture at WJS Canada that allows us to truly live our motto, 'Strength in People'. Your story—what you do every day—is part of our collective story, and we'd like to celebrate that.

Sharing our stories with each other makes the 'glue' that sticks our teams together. By telling stories about our work, we tell each other what is important, and what things we should pay attention to.

I hope you find these stories and principles inspiring, and are inspired to tell your own stories, and show your own way of living our shared values in your own work.

—Caroline Bonesky, chief executive officer

# OUR VALUES & PRINCIPLES

Having clear, shared values helps us to work together better and feel great about what we do, but values alone don't give us clear directions about how to make decisions. Many WJS Canada employees fill demanding roles, work independently, and are trusted to make good judgment calls in situations that impact people's lives.

The principles in this guide tell us more specifically, how we can live our values day to day.

## INTEGRITY

Demonstrating excellence through adherence to professional standards and ethical principles.

## QUALITY

Reliable performance excellence that is realized through continuous improvement and measured by the difference made in people's lives.

## ACCOUNTABILITY

An obligation to account for individual and organizational activities, accept responsibility for them and disclose the results in a transparent manner.

## PASSION

Enthusiasm on the job that encourages employees to use their unique skills and share positive energy with those around them.

## TEAM WORK

A belief that the ability to make a meaningful difference in the lives of others requires a cooperative effort.



# INTEGRITY

DEMONSTRATING EXCELLENCE THROUGH  
ADHERENCE TO PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS  
AND ETHICAL PRINCIPLES

Earn trust by being honest  
and respectful.

Keep the families and individuals you  
serve at the center of all you do.

Be clear and keep your word about our  
prices and the services we provide.

Don't sacrifice quality standards to  
win a contract.

Help get your people  
what they need.

## ADVOCATE FOR THE BEST SERVICE

Employee: Lynn Wanamaker, Regional Service Director,  
Community Living Services BC

In Prince George there is a person who struggles with addiction and psychosis, and who becomes extremely violent when they are using. They are well known in the area, and people there see the problems, but not the person. At WJS, we see the person even when the system doesn't. The manager for Harm Reduction Services in the area knew this individual's actions were a cry for help and an attempt to deal with years of trauma.

Sometimes, advocating for an individual's unique needs means going not just the extra mile, but the extra ten. Local RCMP and Car 60 were not taking him in to receive the psychiatric support he needed, so our manager put in extra hours to arrange meetings with the RCMP, Car 60 and Elders to create a Community Safety Plan and get the supported individual to a psychiatric ward with regular medication.

Lynn Wanamaker says that to really help substance abusers with their addiction and to begin the critical work of addressing their underlying trauma, we can't judge them; we have to connect them to safe people and build engagement. This individual was being judged first by the addiction rather than the need for assessment and wraparound supports.

Approaching this person on a human level and helping establish a sense of connection and guidance quickly got them what they needed. This is the kind of care that produces positive outcomes for people—it's the WJS way.

“ [WJS] provides whatever they need to provide—it's not just something they say, they do it.”

—Tami Huet, Program Director, Nanaimo, BC

## INTEGRITY



“ I’ve been very impressed with how much WJS cares about its clients and they put that above everything. They’re not in it for money, they’re not in it for profit —they’re in it for life.”

—Ablaza Dobson, Outreach Worker, Creston, BC

## INSPIRE TRUST BETWEEN COWORKERS

Employee: William Hames, Program Manager of Residential Treatment Home, Nanaimo, BC

You can't always control your work environment, and at times you can feel like it's impossible to meet both work and family demands. WJS supervisors understand this. We support our teams to build trust and confidence in each other, and to take care of each other when schedules get busy. Our directors watch for signs of burnout in their teams, and will step in to make sure their people get time to be people, too.

William Hames was a single dad with two young kids. He was new to his role at WJS and wanted to take on work; he had a policy that he would take any unfilled shift. "I was called in a lot," he says.

But a shift came up on his birthday, and his kids had a celebration planned; that's when his program director stepped in and took the shift for him. "I had been missing so much time with my kids and she knows how important my relationship to them is," says William. In respect of how much extra on-call work he had done, William's director also helped him to take a following week off, to spend more quality time with his kids.

Getting recognition for the work William had put in inspired a strong relationship of trust and respect between him and his director. "She understands, she makes time for me," he says. "She's everything you would want in a mentor."

“ We hardly ever say no, because there is no reason to.”

—Douglas Hayes, Manager, Individual Placement Program, BC



# QUALITY

RELIABLE PERFORMANCE EXCELLENCE THAT IS  
REALIZED THROUGH CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT  
AND MEASURED BY THE DIFFERENCE MADE IN  
PEOPLE'S LIVES

Make time to learn—it can  
happen anywhere, any time.

Deliver the best quality  
service that you can.

Make safety for everyone part  
of every action and decision.

Look for feedback on your  
work and use it to improve.

## CHOOSE THE RIGHT COURSE OF ACTION

Employee: Doug Hayes, Manager, Individual Placement Program, BC

Every day, WJS encounters people who are “outside the box” of standard treatment options. We work to make the box bigger for the people we serve, so they get the quality of service they need. Doug Hayes remembers a particularly striking teenager who came through the Individual Placement Program in Penticton: long hair covering his face, a gaunt frame, shy yet volatile, and struggling with a heroin addiction. As a part of the youth’s rehabilitation, his home team wanted to put him on methadone, but Doug feared that the effects of methadone might be a barrier to him completing his placement program.

Doug knew another option was needed. He advocated successfully for trying Suboxone—knowing that it had fewer side effects—but also knowing it had only been used by a youth in BC once before. It worked. “He got stronger, cut his hair, and was so elevated compared to when he had arrived,” Doug says. The teen successfully graduated from the program, returned to his parents and went back to school. His youth probation officer didn’t even recognize him due to the dramatic transformation in his appearance and attitude.

Doug attributes the positive outcome to the youth’s attitude, and the alternative drug treatment. “We as a program stretched and risked ourselves to try and get this new drug, but I knew it would be good,” Doug says. Through knowledge, research, and compassion, WJS was able to provide the optimal services for this youth, who thrived because of the quality of care he received.

“ It’s more than just a position. You’re a person to them.”

—Marta Vargas, Program Manager, Surrey, BC

## LEARN NEW APPROACHES

Employee: Tami Huet, Program Director, Residential Programs for Children and Family Services, Nanaimo, BC

“The only constant is change,” they say, but social service providers can be slow to change, bound as they are to defined policies, standards, and evaluations. “One of the things that inspires me about WJS is willingness to change,” says Tami Huet. “The company is willing to try new ideas to stay ahead of the curve.”

Tami works with many people who have experienced trauma. She had heard about the benefits of Trauma Informed Practice and asked for training; WJS quickly agreed and sent her to Massachusetts for training.

WJS is one of the first organizations in BC to use Trauma Informed Practice. WJS makes a point of staying open to learning new service frameworks. To Tami, this receptiveness to making training accessible demonstrates that she works for a people-centered business.

Today, Tami leads training in Trauma Informed Practice for other WJS employees. “It really does say, okay, if this is going to help our people then we’re going to do it,” she says. “If it will help the people we serve, our staff, it’s not about how much money we’re making, it’s about the services we provide.”



## FOCUS ON OUTCOMES THAT MATTER

Employee: Steve Quin, Program Director, Ontario

“The education system often demands productivity from kids,” says Steve Quin, and that can make the mainstream school system an uncomfortable place for youth, particularly those coming from trauma and abuse. WJS extends the capacity of teachers and other providers in the mainstream system by creating safe spaces for youth to flourish.

Steve Quin helped open the Academic Connections through Empowerment (ACE) program, and had a modern classroom built for its services. It provides the youth served with a space where they can take ownership of their educational experience.

Steve recalls a youth who exemplified what the new program envisioned—he was notorious for running away from school and was also a selective mute. At first, even though the youth had a 100% attendance rate, his regular teachers didn’t see the value in the ACE program because the youth still wasn’t completing his other schoolwork.

But Steve knew that his continued attendance mattered—that the ACE classroom was helping him learn how to socialize. “He had decided it was a safe space,” Steve says, “It was a matter of having faith.”

And Steve was right: the youth started speaking in his second year in the program, and now he has friends, is completing school credits, and works a steady job.

Attention to quality means looking for the outcomes that matter—even if it sometimes defies the expectations of our partners in care.

“ One of the things that inspires me about WJS is willingness to change.”

–Tami Huet, Program Director, Residential Programs for Children and Family Services, BC



# ACCOUNTABILITY

AN OBLIGATION TO ACCOUNT FOR INDIVIDUAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL ACTIVITIES, ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY FOR THEM, AND DISCLOSE THE RESULTS IN A TRANSPARENT MANNER

Be clear about what problem you're solving, involve affected people in figuring out a solution and making sure it works, and share what you learn.

Big and small actions can make a big difference. Be patient and careful, and explain your decisions.

Inspire others by accepting responsibility before looking to place blame.



## GO WHERE YOU'RE NEEDED

Employee: Jatinder (JT) Aujla, Program Director, BC

The way that WJS employees take accountability for their role as caring professionals is much more than a matter of policy or best practices. Take JT, for example, who has worked at WJS for the past 23 years. She started as a practicum student and has worked to become the program director of Specialized Outreach Services, and one person in particular has inspired her sense of accountability to her role at WJS.

At the first group home JT worked in, she met an individual who was non-verbal, autistic, and had aggressive outbursts. She became his key worker, and over time they developed a very strong connection. “When he’s acting out, all I have to do is sit down with him and he calms down immediately,” she says.

There have been opportunities for JT to move to other programs, but her commitment to this individual has helped her define her place at WJS and develop her skills to best support the programs under her—so much so that her office today is in the basement of the home he lives in. “I said nope, I’m not leaving this home!” JT laughs. “I work out of this office still because of him and because I feel like we grew up together.”

While she no longer manages the house, JT maintains that relationship because she knows that individual benefits so much from her presence. “We have that connection,” she says.

## STEP UP TO A CHALLENGE

Employee: Sandra Sac Aguilar, Team Leader, Alberta

Caring for people is a 24/7 commitment—our people served don't get to take “days off” from needing the services we provide. Not only do we hold ourselves accountable to deliver what we say we will, we strongly support each other—even in some strange circumstances!

One weekend, Sandra Sac Aguilar was understaffed for three different homes. Every home is different, but they all involve overseeing a number of important things, including ensuring residents are fed and taking their medications, and providing a spectrum of support where needed.

Even though she knew they would have come in if she asked them, she knew her front line staff had already been on for two weeks straight and needed a break. “The front line staff help out the most,” she says. Sandra decided to work the weekend herself at one home, while another team leader came off their vacation to work at one other—but they still needed someone for the last home—and their interim program director came in to help. “I thought it was a joke,” Sandra says. “She had an emergency tooth pulled just before, but she still showed up.”

The willingness of the team leader and interim program manager was encouraging for Sandra. “Those little things show you how you're really supported,” she says. Together Sandra and the two other supervisors managed the houses for the weekend to ensure that people got the care they needed, and the hardworking frontline staff got the rest they deserved.

“ I work out of this office still because of him and because I feel like we grew up together.”

—Jatinder (JT) Aujla, Program Director, BC

## REMEMBER WHAT MAKES A DIFFERENCE

Employee: Donna Phillips, Regional Service Director, Alberta

One of the stories that has been shared at WJS for years is a poignant example of how our accountability to people comes from the very top.

Meeting tight deadlines is part of the gig in social services. One Friday, Donna Phillips and Peter Farnden (then CEO) were hustling to get a proposal completed that was due the following Monday. At two o'clock, Peter suddenly said he had to leave. Donna couldn't believe it—there was still so much work to get through.

"What do you mean?" she asked.

"I have a birthday party to go to, and I have to get root beer," Peter said.

This wasn't just any birthday party. It was a celebration for one of their clients, and Peter knew he happened to enjoy root beer a great deal. Peter knew how important it was to be there for the party, even with the proposal deadline looming.

Donna understood. Peter had been working with the "birthday boy" since the first WJS programs opened in Alberta. And she knew that the client would be thrilled by the gesture. "It really brought back that what we're working for, is the clients we serve," she says. "Business is business, but our clients are the reason why we're here."



A photograph of two women standing outdoors in front of green foliage. The woman on the left has long brown hair and wears glasses and a pink top. The woman on the right has short brown hair and wears a blue long-sleeved shirt. They are both smiling. An orange diagonal banner with the word 'PASSION' in white capital letters is overlaid on the right side of the image.

# PASSION

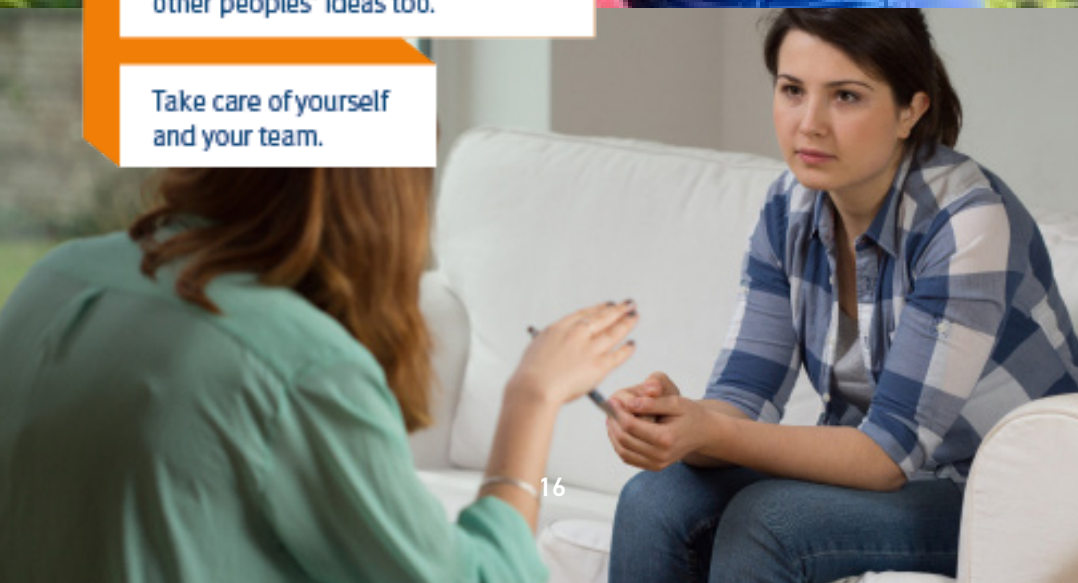
ENTHUSIASM ON THE JOB THAT ENCOURAGES  
EMPLOYEES TO USE THEIR UNIQUE SKILLS AND  
SHARE POSITIVE ENERGY WITH THOSE AROUND THEM

**Celebrate your hard work  
and accomplishments!**

**Talk about what you love  
about your work.**

**Share your great ideas, and listen to  
other peoples' ideas too.**

**Take care of yourself  
and your team.**



## GIVE HOPE WHERE THERE IS NONE

Employee: Lorraine Lang, Program Coordinator, Dryden Attendance Centre, Ontario

The work that goes into providing social services well isn't always easy.

It draws on our formal skills, experience, and training, and it also draws deeply on our emotional strength and passion for the work, i.e. our ability to bring hope and light to people we serve and give them the opportunity to transform their lives.

"You have to see the hope that they see in themselves," says Lorraine Lang, the only employee at the Dryden Attendance Centre. Lorraine supports many at-risk First Nations youth at the Centre and she feels motivated to provide services that produce meaningful differences for them.

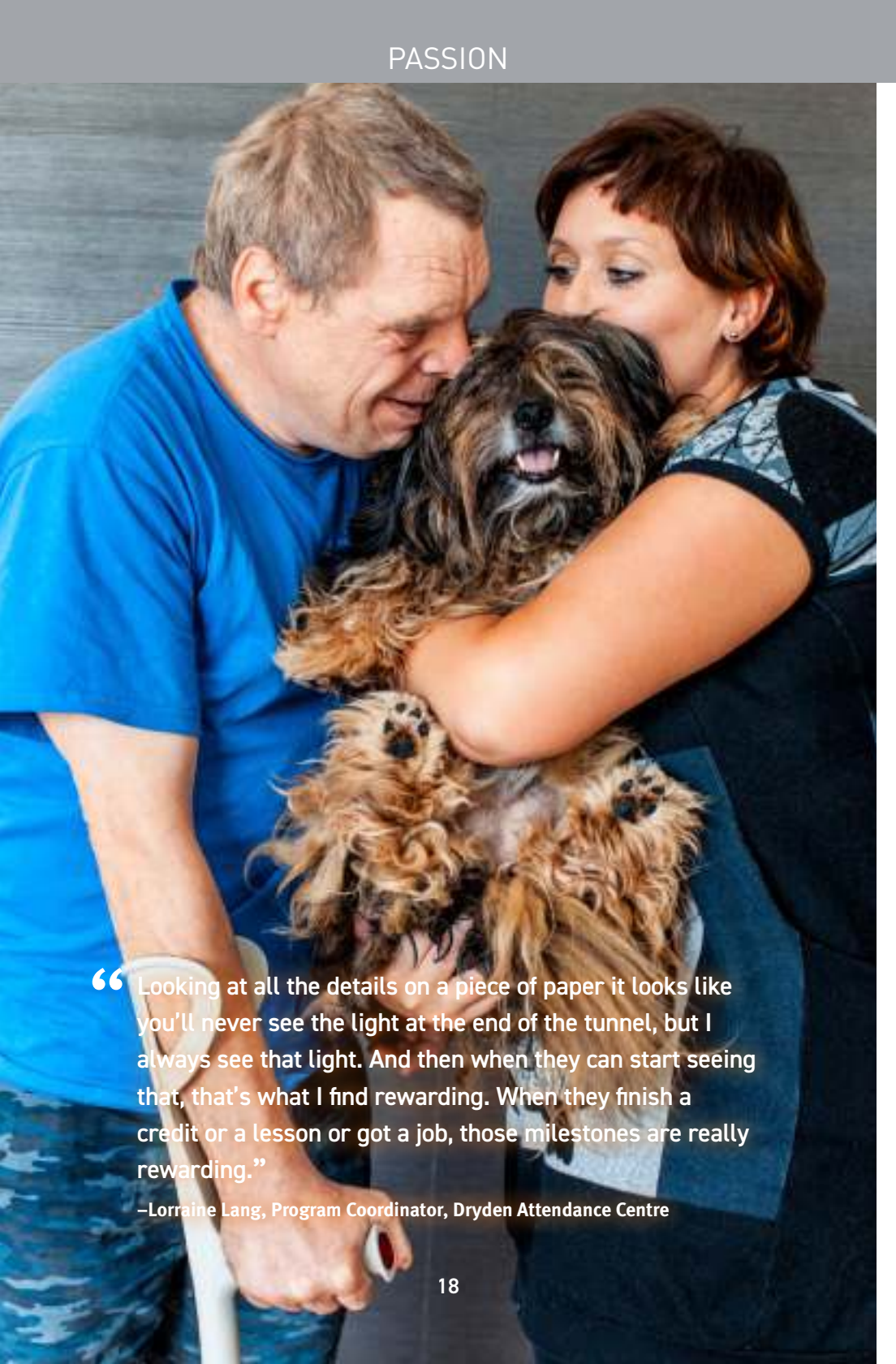
There was one young man referred to the Centre who came from a difficult home environment and was skipping class to use substances with a group on the school grounds. At first, he didn't do his schoolwork but Lorraine worked to ensure that he was simply present and she gave him a safe place where he could feel comfortable.

"Their situations seem so hopeless, yet I see so much hope," Lorraine says. "Looking at all the details on a piece of paper it looks like you'll never see the light at the end of the tunnel, but I always see that light."

Lorraine's hope was catching—the young man achieved the required work hours for an employment program and started completing credits for school courses, and has plans to integrate back into the mainstream school system.

**“ That real sense of being and belonging in a community is something that is a real big part of WJS.”**

—Aaron Hachowski, Regional Program Director, Red Deer, AB

A photograph of a man and a woman holding a large, shaggy dog. The man, on the left, is wearing a blue t-shirt and has his arm around the dog. The woman, on the right, is wearing a dark top and is also holding the dog. The dog is looking up and has its mouth open, showing its teeth. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

“ Looking at all the details on a piece of paper it looks like you’ll never see the light at the end of the tunnel, but I always see that light. And then when they can start seeing that, that’s what I find rewarding. When they finish a credit or a lesson or got a job, those milestones are really rewarding.”

—Lorraine Lang, Program Coordinator, Dryden Attendance Centre

## SEE WHERE PASSION LEADS YOU

Employee: Robert Grenier, Program Coordinator, Ontario

Having passion for the work that WJS does means seeing the potential in someone and having the patience to see them through an extended process, even (or especially) when others won't. As in Robert Grenier's case below, passion is rewarded by seeing the impact of your work.

In Sioux Lookout, Ontario, there was a young individual who has FASD and was exposed to substance abuse by family in his home. As a result, the youth felt unsafe and often had angry outbursts.

The young person was Robert's first client. Robert guided the individual through an anger management program not just once—but six times! Robert felt the repetition would be beneficial, because of their FASD, and remained patient and supportive throughout the process. He then supported the youth through a working program to find them employment.

The individual has now held down their job for three years. Robert recalls the individual telling him that if it weren't for his help they would be in jail. They may still have outbursts but now they have the tools to deal with them to produce positive results.

Robert Grenier is the only employee at the Centre in Sioux Lookout. It's an exceptional amount of work to support young offenders through a variety of services and maintain the facilities on his own but he knows the services are valuable to youth in the area. It is the achievements and connections like those of the first young person he worked with that inspire Robert to do the work, put in the extra hours, and keep expanding services throughout his area.

**“It makes me realize I'm doing something great for the community.”**

—Ablaza Dobson, Outreach Worker, Creston, BC



# TEAM WORK

A BELIEF THAT THE ABILITY TO MAKE A  
MEANINGFUL DIFFERENCE IN THE LIVES  
OF OTHERS REQUIRES A COOPERATIVE  
EFFORT



Ask for help when you need it; accept help when it's offered, and offer help without waiting to be asked.

Show your team that you appreciate their skills, talent, and experience.

Everyone is important—do your part to make your team successful.

### BUILD THE TEAM YOU NEED TO SUCCEED

Employee: Morgan Ann Smolak-Goddard, Transition Leader, ACE Program

Employee: Tracey Stack-Rose, Program Coordinator, Kenora Attendance Centre, Location: Ontario

At WJS, “team work” is working with your colleagues, and also working effectively and creatively with the whole community of supports around a client. Tracey and Morgan work closely together to support youth through their programs in Kenora, so teamwork is a key aspect of their services. At times, outside players also need to be engaged as part of a team that best suits the needs of the youth.

They had one young woman named Wataway, whose name means “Northern Lights”, who was artistic, enthusiastic, and kind. “She came to us and was just a shining person,” says Tracey. Wataway showed great potential to be the first person in her family to graduate from school. But Tracey, Morgan, and the WJS staff recognized that there were challenges that threatened to hamper her progress. Wataway came from a difficult upbringing and was emancipated from her parents at a young age. There was tremendous pressure on her to succeed in her education and she often battled with anxiety and exhaustion.

Tracey and Morgan worked with her school’s vice principal, guidance counsellors, a mental health nurse, and the local Seven Generations institute to inspire her toward completing all of her work to graduate. Through their combined efforts Wataway completed her credits and community service hours ultimately becoming the first graduate of the ACE program.

Now, she has a full-time job, is in a stable relationship, and has been able to remain close to her family despite her difficult childhood. “There aren’t enough words to express how proud we are, and the team that worked together for this client, at the responsible, confident, motivated young woman Wataway has become.”

“When the people around you are inspiring, you want to help.”

—Monty Chew, National Management Team, BC

## TAKE CARE OF EACH OTHER

Employee: Marta Vargas, Program Manager, BC

We're a team on the job, and we're a team off the job as well. Several WJS employees count their co-workers as a "second family". Within her first year of working for the organization, Marta Vargas became very ill and was hospitalized as a result. In her previous job, she had also been seriously ill and when she requested time off she remembers simply being asked when she would return to work. But at WJS, her team assured her not to worry. "They checked in on me all the time, making sure I was okay. It was really emotional," Marta recalls.

Her coworkers showed up at the hospital, sent her flowers, and visited her house when she was able to recover there. "You felt they were thinking about you and that they really cared," says Marta. Working as a team makes a difference in Marta's personal life and makes her feel valued as an employee. "It's more than just a position. You're a person to them."

Successful teamwork is visible through front-line work, but the culture of cooperation and care at WJS builds strong relationships behind the scenes as well. Even as a newer employee at WJS, Marta Vargas has already felt acknowledged and appreciated not only in her work but in her personal life as well.

We make a point of celebrating hard work and achievements, and we encourage people to make those gestures that exemplify genuine care for the people around you.

**“ I feel like my voice is heard and I feel like I’m valued.”**

–Marta Vargas, Program Manager, Surrey BC

### DON'T WAIT TO BE ASKED TO HELP

Employee: Donna Phillips, Regional Service Director, Alberta

Sometimes the events around us happen faster than our ability to plan for them—and that's when the true culture of an organization shines through. The wildfires that swept through the communities of Fort McMurray in the spring of 2016 were nothing short of devastating. Many thousands of people were evacuated from their homes, including WJS staff and clients. Our teams in Alberta decided to go where their clients were evacuated, even if their own families were being moved elsewhere. They recognized the need to support their clients in a time of crisis.

One staff member travelled from Bonnyville to serve a client who could not stay in Edmonton, where their family had been moved to in the evacuation. This way, the team gave support to the individual and their family in both locations. Additionally, WJS arranged seminars for staff to learn how to make insurance claims while also providing regular pay to assist them through this chaotic period.

WJS was the only agency to stay with its clients during the Fort McMurray fires, with staff from across Alberta working together to coordinate supports and ensure the wellbeing of the evacuated staff members and the people they served. From finding stable housing, to organizing clothing donations, they were in it together to support one another as a team.



“For me this job feels like I won the lottery, it’s exactly what I want to do, the people are amazing. I love coming here!”

Corina Nolin, Administrative Assistant,  
Fort McMurray, AB

A woman with blonde hair, wearing a black jacket and blue jeans, is smiling and holding the hands of two young boys. They are all jumping into a large, muddy puddle on a paved surface. The boy on the left is wearing a red and blue jacket, and the boy on the right is wearing a red and black jacket. There is a large splash of mud and water in the foreground. The background shows a grassy area and some buildings under a cloudy sky.

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