

A woman and a young man are sitting at a wooden table, laughing heartily. The woman is on the left, wearing a white shirt, and the young man is on the right, wearing a dark blue shirt. They are both looking at each other. On the table in front of them is a piece of paper with a colorful drawing of a person's head and shoulders. The background is a bright, out-of-focus indoor space.

**YOUR STORY  
IS OUR STORY**

**wjs** Canada  
strength in people

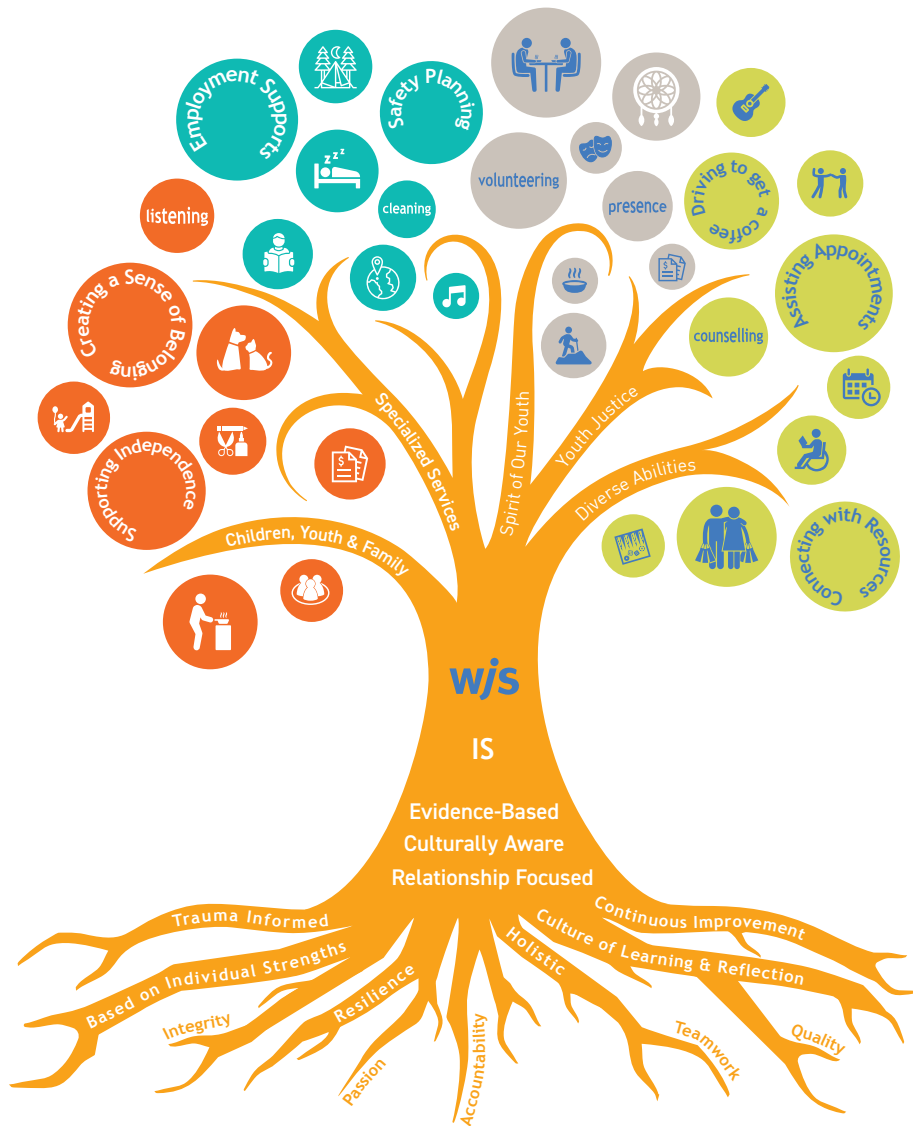
## SERVICE DELIVERY MODEL

## A MESSAGE FROM CAROL SIZIBA, CHIEF OF CLIENT SERVICES

All of our programs within WJS are unique and special in their own way. Our approach to supporting individuals within these programs also becomes unique. The service delivery model is intended to capture that uniqueness while maintaining consistency in the core principles underlying how we do the work.

This book captures the stories of resilient individuals who have experienced trauma and who have had incredible success. Caring staff have walked alongside, nurturing the relationships, being aware of the influence of culture in healing, focusing on the strengths of the individual, learning from one another and seeing the whole person, not their trauma or behaviors. Staff have continuously been creative to engage in activities that create the safe and welcoming environment that promotes healing, independence, sense of belonging and connection.

The service delivery model gives us a common understanding of what guides us in doing the work that transforms lives while being rooted in our values. The work of caring for families, children, youth and individuals is “heart work”. The stories captured here gently remind us that the individuals we care for are resilient. By simple activities such as being present, we get the pleasure of walking alongside as their lives are transformed.



## OUR ROOTS

**Employee:** Anna Chudyk

Family Support Worker | Family Preservation Program, Alberta



*“It’s about believing in our clients.  
They can do incredible things and are very resilient.”*

## STRONG MOTHER WORKING TO GET HER KIDS BACK FROM CHILD SERVICES

As a family support worker, Anna Chudyk helps build parenting skills, strategies, connections to community resources, and guides families through working collaboratively with Children’s Services. Providing these supports often comes in the face of great challenges that benefit from a thoughtful, holistic approach.

One of the individuals Anna worked with is a mother whose children had been apprehended by Children’s Services (CS). Anna knew she needed to help the mother understand how to work with CS to get her kids back. So Anna took a trauma informed approach to help the mother learn and reflect upon the circumstances she found herself in. One of the steps to do this was making a genogram to look back at the mother’s ancestry and also her family trauma. This exercise helped the mom identify that she was the fourth generation to have her kids taken from her.

“Seeing those intergenerational patterns, she became aware of how essentially she was at a cumulative disadvantage,” says Anna. “Everything in her life was stacked against her.”

Another significant breakthrough came through crafting a story book about her children’s apprehension that helped the mother confront why her children had been apprehended by CS. At first, the mother didn’t see the value in this exercise. Then one day, it just clicked.

“She never wanted to harm her children,” recalls Anna. “And it took processing her family’s story to realize that she did have a part in her children’s apprehension as well.

It was that taking ownership of her role in it. That the neglect and abuse was not what she intended or wanted to do towards her children. For her to say, ‘I have to acknowledge my role, in order to move forward and for my children to heal. To apologize, be accountable to them and explain what I did and why it happened.’”

This was a huge step for the mother so that she could look at CS differently and see that they wanted to collaborate with her to get her children back. She acknowledged the forms of abuse and neglect she participated in, and admitted and confronted this painful reality; but she knew she needed to do it so the cycle would not continue with her children. “It ends with me,” she said, “I am now going to start living for my family.”

After some time of working with Anna, the mother was told she was getting her kids back. Hearing this news, the client said in tears, “I did it. I broke the cycle.”

She knew the weight of her words. She was the first in her family to get her kids back -- it was a success that was also intergenerational healing that meant her children wouldn’t have to repeat this cycle. Anna supported the mom as a whole person using a trauma informed approach that included creating a safe environment that gave the space for the mother to reflect and learn, while recognizing the strengths and resilience of the mother.



## OUR ROOTS

**Employee:** Juanita Cloutier

Family Support Worker | Strong Families Program, Alberta

*“It’s power with, not power over. That’s very significant for me and I just hold that very close to myself when working with my clients.”*



## WORKING WITH A RESILIENT GRANDMOTHER TO TAKE CARE OF HER GRANDKIDS AS THEIR PRIMARY GUARDIAN

As a family support worker, Juanita Cloutier will regularly visit folks in their homes and help them navigate challenging circumstances. She provides education around healthy relationships, impacts of domestic violence, emotional regulation, parenting, and health. To do all of this, she takes great care and consideration in her approach to each individual.

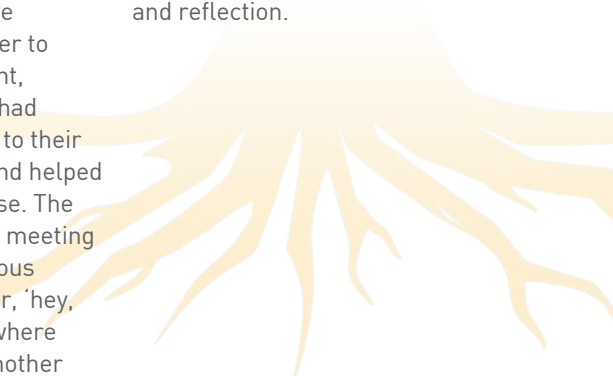
One example is a grandmother Juanita worked with. She was the primary caregiver of her grandchildren who were struggling in school and faced learning disabilities. Her teenage granddaughter in particular had difficulties with substance abuse, an unhealthy relationship, and was frequently running away from home. When Children’s Services (CS) entered the picture, the grandmother grew more worried.

Due to the grandmother’s previous experiences, having her own children involved with CS, she didn’t have a lot of trust in these institutions given her negative history. With this knowledge, Juanita started by working with the grandmother to build a relationship through a trauma-informed approach, building trust and safety. She gave plenty of space to the grandmother to talk and listened without judgment, acknowledging the pain that she had been through. Juanita connected to their shared indigenous background and helped the grandmother feel more at ease. The grandmother was uncomfortable meeting with Juanita at the house for various reasons. “So I opened the door for, ‘hey, I know places in the community where we can meet,’” to give the grandmother

choices for a safe environment. In one moving conversation, the grandmother said “she felt safe with Juanita.”

“It spoke volumes to me that I was on the right path in helping my clients,” says Juanita, “that the relationships we’re creating with our clients are number one, and it gave me reassurance that practicing with that trauma-informed mindset and being culturally sensitive is such an important part of our job.”

They worked and learned together to reassess goals and options available as they reprioritized safely getting the granddaughter back into the grandmother’s care and attending school. It was a long journey that required Juanita supporting the family through court systems, but in the end the grandmother felt that she had reached her goals. Juanita brought intentionality to her work, drawing on the resilience of the grandmother by being open, creating safety, building a relationship based on trust, understanding and non judgemental and incorporating a culture of learning and reflection.



## OUR ROOTS

### Employee: Sheila Grant

Director of Shared Living and Surrey Cluster

Director CIC Foster and Primary Care, British Columbia

### Employee: Marissa Taylor

Home Share Program Manager, CLBC Shared Living Services



*“It’s just reframing and stepping inside their head to hear how they’re hearing things. And then communicating that back in a way that they understand, or the way they want to view it.”*

## BUILDING ON A YOUTH’S INDIVIDUAL STRENGTHS TO GROW TOWARDS INDEPENDENCE

Sheila works with her team and home share providers to provide support for youth at WJS through shared living services. Many enter care with diverse abilities and complex backgrounds, making a holistic approach to service delivery an especially important practice.

One youth who entered their homeshare program and had severe social anxiety. “COVID was a disaster for him,” Sheila says. He refused to leave his place or allow the homeshare provider to enter. On top of this, he was eating an unhealthy diet due to his fear of leaving the house to shop for groceries. There were a lot of obstacles to overcome, so Sheila started by getting to know him: his past, his strengths, and his own goals.

“He didn’t do well in high school,” Sheila says. “He put more pressure on himself than he had the capacity for to succeed. He knows his own challenges but he doesn’t want to be seen as stupid or needing support. He came from trauma, so the team worked to build trust with him.”

With this knowledge, Sheila took a compassionate approach. He was young, and she explained that everyone his age is learning how to be an adult. She reframed the term homeshare as semi-independent living, helping him see that he did need support but it was so he could achieve his goal of living independently in the next five years. They set diet and sleep goals with him as a starting point for him to grow from.

“I reframed it as, ‘let’s work on your strengths here, you’re super smart. So let’s focus on that,’” Sheila says of the

approach she, Marissa, and the team took. “He likes doing research so I encouraged him to use some of those skills to look up other things about correcting sleep habits and to consider [food alternatives].”

The next step in this was to encourage him to work with his home share provider to schedule a time to go grocery shopping. The team told him he could decide to not go, but needed to make a list with some healthy foods on it for the home share provider to pick up. It took a few tries, but eventually he began joining the home share provider on these shopping trips. It started with going for a walk around the block, then a bit further, and then within a few weeks, he had gone to the grocery store with the home share provider. Now, he lets the home share provider into his space, and regularly goes for walks. He’s introduced healthier food options into his diet, is sleeping better, and seeing people while managing his social anxiety.

“That’s huge,” says Sheila of his progress. She and Marissa used a both trauma informed and holistic approach by listening, reframing and identifying his individual strengths which created a safe environment for growth. Hearing and listening to him allowed the team to continuously improve the support needed. This all supported the achievement of his personal goals. “It’s just reframing and stepping inside their head to hear how they’re hearing things. And then communicating that back in a way that they understand, or the way they want to view it.”

## OUR ROOTS

**Employee:** Sherry Flemming  
Family Resilience Program,  
Children and Family Services in Alberta



*“My role is just to make those connections and help facilitate the beauty that’s already there.”*

## A COURAGEOUS FAMILY DEALING WITH CHRONIC ILLNESS BUILD A HOLISTIC CONNECTION

Sherry Flemming works with families to understand their concerns, look for strengths and missed opportunities to help them manage their stresses. In her experience, taking a well rounded approach that connects the physical, emotional, and social needs of the family helps to open their heart to change.

One family Sherry worked with had a child suffering from chronic health issues. She could see that the focus had been primarily on the child’s physical health which was preventing the family from connecting and communicating with each other. “The healthcare was there, but the emotional and social pieces had been missing,” Sherry says.

Sherry proposed facilitated meetings where she could support meaningful conversations between them and give them space to engage with their fears outside of the medical issues in their life. She would introduce questions like “What is something meaningful to you? What’s on your heart? What is something you would like them to know that you haven’t said?” This shifted things away from the medical regimen to instead look at each other and express their feelings. The mother in particular was able to vocalize her fears about her child’s future and wellbeing, something she had been suppressing in order to put on a brave face. The youth, in turn, was appreciative of these facilitated talks because they could better understand their parents’ emotions and feel more comfortable expressing their own.

“A lot of the affirmations that came out of those conversations were that sometimes we assume other people know what we’re thinking and understand what’s happening with us,” says Sherry. “But sometimes, we just really need to hear it.”

The primary goals for this family were increased communication and connection; the secondary goal was consistent family time, which facilitates the primary goals. The mother expressed immense gratitude for Sherry’s role in helping them connect all these pieces in meaningful ways after so many years of dealing with just the medical conditions. Through this holistic approach, Sherry recognized the family’s resilience and supported them finding a place where they could learn and reflect together. They are also reviewing and reassessing their goals to see what they can do to improve next. Sherry facilitated the process for holding a safe space where everyone could be heard, listened to and valued.

“For the family, it’s all there,” says Sherry. “My role is just to make those connections and help facilitate the beauty that’s already there.”





## COMPASSIONATE EMPLOYEE SHOWS THE STRENGTH OF USING A CULTURALLY AWARE APPROACH

Putting the individual or family at the center of things is crucial to effective service delivery. This means considering their history, background, and safety to meaningfully focus on their particular needs. Cultural awareness is a huge part of the strength of WJS as an organization, and something Dorene Guillon deeply understands in her work with Children and Family services.

Working primarily with clients who are First Nations, Dorene's own ancestry and past significantly informs her approach to care.

"The connection to who you are is really important," she says. Growing up, Dorene says she was ashamed of her identity and felt no meaningful connection to her Métis ancestry. She struggled as a single parent and didn't feel like she belonged anywhere. But later in life, Dorene got her mother's First Nations status and Band membership recognized, and it provided a shift for her to recognize her own self worth.

"I started accepting and allowing myself to embrace that I am First Nations and that I should love myself," she says. "That's where the services start with people: letting them know there is nothing to be ashamed of as First Nations."

Dorene promotes understanding and awareness of people's pasts and the intergenerational pain that impacts

them and their community to this day. "I think it helps share a sense of belonging and love," she says.

Dorene brings this evidence-based, cultural awareness to her clients by speaking as much as possible in their language, incorporating the use of traditional beliefs and tools like medicine wheels into parenting supports, and connecting people to community and cultural resources, such as a ladies' sweat lodge, drum making, spiritual teachings, and learnings from Elders. These are some of the day to day activities that transform lives for families.

This culturally-informed approach has shown Dorene just how resilient and successful her people can be. "With the proper tools and support, we can move our people to be self-sufficient," she says. "We do not have to be statistics."

## OUR TRUNK

**Employee: Dorene Guillon**

Family Support Worker

Children and Family Services, Alberta



*"With the proper tools and support, we can move our people to be self-sufficient. We do not have to be statistics."*

## A BRAVE MOTHER WORKS TOWARDS SOBRIETY AND STABILITY TO GET HER CHILD BACK

Eleanor Smith is a family support worker in Alberta, where her job is to work with parents dealing with child services. Given the stress and emotional pain involved, she focuses on building strong relationships with families and giving them the tools to overcome their challenges. One parent she remembers was a young mother who had a physically and emotionally abusive past and had turned to drinking to cope with her pain. Children's Services (CS) stated that her child needed to be removed from her care until she dealt with her addiction and past trauma, and a referral was sent to WJS to work with the mother to help support her as she began her journey of sobriety. The mother was determined and Eleanor began working with her to develop a treatment plan, attend a treatment facility, connect her with long-term support in the community, and access mental health services.

"I had to explain to her even though I report back to CS, I'm on your side supporting you, to help you get rid of all the worries that CS has at this time," says Eleanor. She did not talk to the mother about her addiction at first because she wanted to create space for trust to develop between them. For many of their visits, Eleanor focused on being there to really listen and support the mother to make small decisions for herself.

The mother revealed she had been in a car crash that had left her with brain

trauma and required her to relearn how to walk. As a result, Eleanor connected her to a brain injury worker that could help her to learn and communicate more effectively, while also dealing with some of her past trauma. Building on this space of safety, Eleanor started to set goals with her.

Their biggest goal was to keep the mother's child in her life, and they talked through how they were going to achieve that with CS. This meant confronting the addiction part and getting support through counselling. Eleanor assured the mother that confidentiality would be maintained, something the mom had not understood before. "I think just the education part in helping her understand the supports around her was important," says Eleanor. "A big part of my job is helping them see that CS wants them to succeed."

Eleanor focused on giving her suggestions for further resources she could choose from, like meeting with a group of other moms to relate to and learn from their parenting experiences. "I just kept her involved in different things in the community and praising her for every little step of success that she took, and then eventually our relationship just got really really tight," Eleanor says.

By putting the mother at the center, her self worth grew as well as her ability to keep her son in her life.

## OUR TRUNK

She got into a treatment plan, created a safety and support network, and worked to maintain sobriety. When CS told her they were closing her file, the mother cried because she was going to miss everyone that worked with her to keep her son. Eleanor's relationship focused approach created a space of trust and safety, where the mother was then able to recognize her own

strengths and resilience. By focusing on the mom connecting with more resources, it allowed her to expand on her networks of resources that she could access after her file closed. "It's a tremendous success," Eleanor says. "A big thing for her was helping her understand that she had a voice and that she could stand up for herself."

**Employee: Eleanor Smith**  
Children and Family Services, Alberta

*"You're the only one who can do it. I'm just going to be here for you to lean on and to get information from and to support."*





## RELATIONSHIP BUILDING WITH A DETERMINED YOUNG MAN THAT SOCIETY HAD REJECTED

Marie Stad very clearly remembers when WJS was approached to meet with an individual that presented with high complex needs. Based on the profile of the individual, other agencies were hesitant to take him and the referring source was not confident about his ability to reintegrate back into society. But Marie and her team felt that by looking at his history and putting him at the center they could find a way to build a safe and trusting relationship with the young man.

Marie and her team moved him into a suite where he was supervised by staff who were awake 24 hours a day. But he was very protective of his space. He did not want staff using his bathroom or touching his personal items. He was very particular about which parts of the house staff accessed. He also struggled with understanding finances, which added to the many challenges he was facing to achieve independence. But Marie also took the time to understand these difficulties. "He had been in services since he was a child," she says. "Both his parents had significant medical challenges that made it very difficult for him growing up in the home." Marie knew supporting him would be hard, but she wanted to help him live in society again.

"You just kind of breathe, but you go back the next day and you say, 'look, yesterday was a bad day. But I'm still here. Today is a new day,'" says Marie. "We just kept building

on that, and I think just letting him know I wasn't leaving him and that I wasn't discounting him was really significant."

They celebrated all his wins, even seemingly small things like letting staff use a different chair or sit in the living room with him. Marie worked with him to plan his finances and how to save for items he wanted. By building a relationship based on trust and respect, he began to gain confidence and make progress. After several years of working with Marie, he said he didn't think he wanted people around him 24 hours a day. So they started adjusting the staffing supports, allowing for the young man to have time to himself. Hours slowly decreased to 16 hours a day, to 8 hours a day, to 4 hours a week. Eventually, he no longer needed services and was living fully independently in his own house with a dog and visiting with family.

"This young man went from being somebody that people didn't think would ever be able to be in society, to somebody who lived on his own and knew how to save money," Marie says. "Just seeing his value and reminding him of that. He had such an effect on me."

Very sadly, the young man passed away under tragic circumstances. But Marie, who was one of only a handful of people asked to attend

## OUR TRUNK

the funeral, feels incredibly privileged to have had this entire experience. The value of their relationship, using trauma-informed practices such as creating a safe space, listening to him, empowering him to make choices and focusing on his individual strengths, all came together to produce great outcomes.

**Employee: Marie Stad**

Program Manager

Persons with Diverse Abilities, Alberta

"He was such a significant part of my life for those years, you know," she says. "Seeing him grow and knowing that when he passed away he was happy and he was in a home on his own. He was a fully independent, capable person."

*"The biggest thing was just learning how to listen. I wasn't in there to think about fixing him. I was in there to learn how to make him feel better about himself."*



## A PERSEVERING FIRST NATIONS YOUTH RECONNECTS WITH HIS CULTURE AND GAINS INDEPENDENCE TO GRADUATE WITH HONOURS

As a family support worker, Rodney Noskiye helps families and youth rebuild their connections with each other. In particular, Rodney feels the significance of cultural awareness with those he works with, in particular with First Nations youth who are on their journey to independent living.

"Oftentimes, youth are not aware of the support and resources available to them in the area, and by working with them, I am able to provide them access to these places," says Rodney. "The youth I work with are interested in learning the Cree culture, so I connect them to the Elders in the community and attend [local] cultural events with them. Being fluent in the Cree language, I am able to share the language with those who are willing to learn."

There was one youth he worked with who was having trouble finishing high school. They were alone, disconnected from their culture and had no family to help them live a clean and sober life. "I took the opportunity to meet with this person and was simply there for him and to listen to whatever he had to say." Rodney's goals were to help the youth complete high school, find a job, and reconnect with his background. To do so, Rodney worked on creating a relationship with him: they created a resumé together and worked on communication skills; he listened to the youth when they were

feeling frustrated and gave them guidance in finding tutoring and addictions counselling. "I used my active listening skills to make them feel heard. I held space for him and reassured him that I would be there to help him if he needed help," he reflects.

But above all, one of the most important things he says he was able to do was reconnect them to their culture and help them understand the deeper meaning of their past. This individual was able to discover the many centres and providers of their culture within the community, such as the Native Friendship Centre, which helped him to understand who he was. While Rodney says the youth did stumble during his journey, he was able to obtain an apartment and live independently. He secured a job, reconnected with his family and graduated from high school with Honours.

"This experience has taught me valuable lessons in patience and the importance of perseverance," Rodney says. By taking a culturally aware approach, he built a relationship that included a holistic culture of learning and reflection. Connecting them to their past helped "ground them and provide them with the opportunity to better themselves for the future."

## OUR TRUNK

**Employee:** Rodney Noskiye  
Family Support Worker, Alberta



*"One of the most meaningful things I was able to do for this person was to reconnect them with their culture and to help them understand the deeper meaning of their past, to help ground them and to provide them the opportunity to better themselves for the future."*

## OUR BRANCHES

**Employee:** Colleen Turtle

Manager | Shortstop Youth Resource, British Columbia



*“ I do this because I want to be here.  
No other reason.”*

## PROVIDING A CONSISTENT, ACCOUNTABLE, SAFE SPACE FOR FIRST NATIONS YOUTH

Colleen Turtle has been with WJS for so long that when she started working at the organization, she says they used pagers. Today she's the Manager of a youth resource program that is in place to help First Nations youth, and while a lot has changed between her early days and now, for this program's success, consistency is key.

The Shortstop Resource program provides a transition space for youth before they are placed in a home, reunified with family, or simply need a safe place to sleep. "We're here to provide stability," says Colleen. "The doors are open, we can't stop them from coming and going. But we're here to let them know that someone cares and to give them a safe place to live."

The space is set up to feel like a home with lots of plants and a garden, comfortable beds, warm showers, and good food. Colleen says you don't want kids to walk in and feel like they've entered another institution and it's important to prioritize their basic needs: don't overwhelm them, give them space and opportunity to grow, observe them and let them observe you, let them know the support is there and they'll take it if and when they want to. "We're not here

to fix things, we're here to support," Colleen says.

Sometimes it takes weeks before the kids will even talk but the consistency of the house rules and expectations help them feel like they're not going to be judged. They can be angry, they can be quiet, they can need to stay in bed for the day -- what's important is to let them feel the support is there regardless. And one day, they might turn around and ask for a hug, and Colleen is there to give it to them.

Colleen estimates she's seen about 1600 youth go through her program. There are sad stories and uplifting ones, and throughout it all she says she makes sure to keep the basic needs and approach the same because the kids just need to know that there's a safe place for them. Colleen's passion and accountability to these services make sure of it.





## OUR BRANCHES

### Employee: Marie Stad

Program Manager | Persons with Diverse Abilities, Alberta



*“We just built that relationship to let him understand how important he is in this world, encouraging him and making him feel valued[.] He actually brings a lot of joy to a lot of people because he’s so friendly.”*

## BRING PASSION TO PROVIDE QUALITY SERVICES TO A VIBRANT MAN WITH DIVERSE ABILITIES

With such varied needs across all of the programs offered through WJS, the ability to be flexible, creative, and thoughtful is what makes the organization’s services so strong. Marie Stad practices this through the specialized services and support she provides to people of diverse abilities. One person she worked with was a fellow whose intimidating presence and behaviour made it difficult for staff to help him with his hoarding problem. He had a temper and would yell and throw things when people touched his belongings.

“When I first met him, he stood in front of me and said, ‘You can’t make me do anything,’” Marie recalls. “And so I said, ‘I have teenage boys. Bring it on.’”

Initially, this man spent a lot of time in his bed, and Marie wanted to find ways to help him be active and participate in cleaning up his house. “I would just stand by his bedroom door and just talk to him,” she says, “and the first thing I did was I encouraged him to get up and help me with cleaning so that it wasn’t me moving his things.”

She would ask him to move items off the shelf so she could clean it, for example, and these steps helped him start to take pride in cleaning and displaying his belongings. Eventually, he took the initiative to organize things himself. “And then I would just compliment him, without being condescending or patronizing,” says Marie. “The sense of ownership, of pride in what he owns;

and then he’d phone me once a while say, ‘hey guess what I did yesterday? I cleaned my house.’ And he’d just tell me about the different things he did whereas previously it was like he just didn’t do any of that stuff.” She and her team worked with this individual to set up shelving to display his significant Star Wars collection, and his pride grew.

Marie was also able to support him to become more active, lose weight, collaboratively build a better relationship with his parents, and even go on vacation for the first time in over 30 years. Her passion and integrity allowed for this man to receive the high quality services he needed and deserved. Reaching these positive outcomes involved tapping into all the different parts of the service delivery.

“We just built that relationship to let him understand how important he is in this world, encouraging him and making him feel valued,” says Marie. “He actually brings a lot of joy to a lot of people because he’s so friendly.”



## OUR BRANCHES

**Employee:** Tabitha Eddleston

Program Coordinator

Concord Youth Resource, British Columbia

*“You had to be active the whole time with this youth, so we helped each other by giving each other chances to have a break, communicated through shift changes to maintain consistency for the youth, and letting each other know about things that were or were not working.”*



## STRONG TEAMWORK SUPPORTS AND ADVOCATES FOR A BIPOLAR YOUTH WITH SPECIALIZED NEEDS

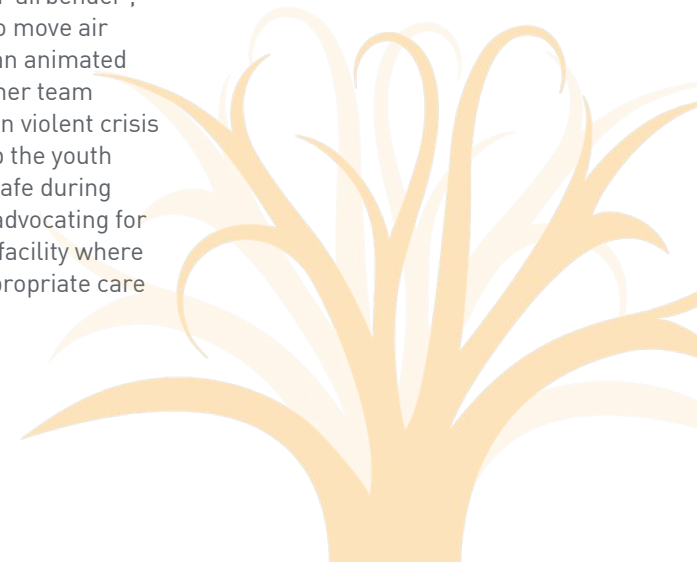
A crucial part of providing effective services for youth is well-trained staff who bring a clear and consistent approach to their work. Tabitha Eddleston has seen this throughout her entire time at WJS.

“I definitely find the same routines and values are definitely about quality and teamwork,” says Tabitha. “[They] are all very consistent within each house I’ve worked at, and I’ve worked with three different houses within WJS.”

In her work providing effective services for youth, Tabitha notes that the training staff receive is particularly important. This helps her and her team identify youths’ needs and also safely deal with crisis intervention through non-violent means. One example was a youth who entered a house and was initially diagnosed as being bi-polar. But they quickly found that the youth had more complex needs. This youth was frequently in a manic state where they believed they were an ‘airbender’, someone with the ability to move air currents at will based on an animated children’s show. She and her team worked together to use non violent crisis intervention tactics to help the youth become calmer and stay safe during these periods, while also advocating for him to enter a healthcare facility where he could receive more appropriate care based on his needs.

“Our goals were to keep him safe and fed,” says Tabitha. “When he was in that state he wouldn’t eat, so we would take the time to prepare a good breakfast and sit down with him in the morning to encourage him to eat. We also redirected him to take showers and sleep so he could stay healthy.” Ultimately, they supported him through enjoyable activities until he could transition to a new care facility.

Tabitha was observant and mindful of not only the youth, but also her staff. Their commitment and teamwork improved the quality of care this youth received, both in their care and after. “You had to be active the whole time with this youth,” she says, “so we helped each other by giving each other chances to have a break, communicated through shift changes to maintain consistency for the youth, and letting each other know about things that were or were not working.”



## CREATIVE PLANNING TO PROVIDE A SENSE OF BELONGING AND INDEPENDENCE FOR RESILIENT YOUTH

One aspect of Raman Boparai's work is helping youth transition to adult housing services and finding places that will be the right fit for their needs. This requires taking things on a case by case basis and time to learn about that particular person.

"You never know what you're really getting on paper versus what we see in person," says Raman. "Their needs and what they communicate to us may be different, so it's going with the flow and then having to change course, multiple times sometimes."

She recalls one youth who was difficult to connect with and would not engage with their outreach efforts. This youth was actively engaging in drug use, street entrenched, disengaged with services and fled her living situation frequently. This youth was also at an age where she would be transitioning to adult services, but Raman and the team were in agreement that independent living would not be best for them. Instead, they managed concurrent planning between their cluster program and homeshare - this would allow them to place her in an adult home before she aged out of the youth program but also maintain the care providers who knew her and could advocate for her during the transition. Repetition and consistency, Raman says, helped the client start to feel more comfortable in her living situation.

"Once you became a familiar face, she was more likely to engage," says Raman.

"Even if they weren't able to see her or talk to her, at least she could recognize they were there for support, not as someone monitoring her -- just that the support is available to them and ready."

All the staff involved were aware of the other programs and supports they were collaborating with and could therefore draw from, allowing for more flexible and thoughtful care for the youth. These actions supported the youth's independence and also created a sense of belonging for her through consistent and accountable staff presence. She recognized that people were there to help her, and felt comfortable accessing care that helped her grow to the point where she could move into independent living. They even gave her the opportunity to choose which care provider she would live with, and respected her decision to go with one that better suited her desire to be close to her street family, a tight knit community that also gives her support.

"You have to let them know you're not going to give up on them," says Raman. "When you're working with so many different agencies I think just being able to communicate and staying consistent really goes a long way." Collaborating with other service providers, empowering her to make her own choices, creating safe space, building relationships based on trust and respect are all elements of trauma informed practices.

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**Employee:** Raman Boparai

Program Manager | Youth Cluster, British Columbia



*"You have to let them know you are not going to give up on them."*



## BEING PRESENT FOR A PERSEVERING MOTHER WORKING TOWARDS HER FAMILY'S INDEPENDENCE

Building a sense of connection with clients is a vital part of providing strong services at WJS. These are the things you do to show you're present, listening, and engaging with them. And sometimes small activities can make a big difference.

A young woman and man that Dorene Guillon worked with for many years demonstrated the impact that connection can have. The couple was just out of high school, with no jobs, no transport, no home, and were in a cycle of having a new child every year. They lived with a family member who had their own challenges. The young mother was additionally suffering from strong postpartum depression. Dorene could feel it was important to be there for her emotionally and take steps to help her connect to community resources.

One of the things that Dorene helped with was getting the young mother to and from doctor appointments. "They didn't have a vehicle so I made sure she was able to go to her prenatal appointments, to go and transport her to all her referrals and for therapist appointments that she had," Dorene says. "It gave her time to get out of the house and that was huge for her, so she could just enjoy the time away."

Dorene also helped her use a medicine wheel to better understand her strengths, weaknesses, support, and

identify when she needed extra help in a certain area of her life. Everytime she got pregnant, Dorene made sure to connect her with prenatal parenting tools and spent a lot of time simply listening to the young mother to be there for her emotionally. "I gave her hope," says Dorene. "I respected her beliefs. I identified her values, identified her needs. And a lot of understanding."

Setting up therapy sessions for the woman and her husband, connecting her to cultural resources like rattle-making workshops, and driving her to get her GED to upgrade her english and math - these were just some of the practical steps that Dorene took to build a strong connection with the young mom to support her family's independence. And the payoff was huge.

Now they have their own home, the father has a job, the kids are in school, and the mom is continuing to build on her self improvement. "She gained a lot of tools to be the parent that she is today," Dorene says. "And they're going to fly. They are my pride and joy."

## OUR LEAVES

**Employee:** Dorene Guillon

Family Support Worker

Children and Family Services, Alberta

*"She gained a lot of tools to be the parent that she is today, and they're going to fly. They are my pride and joy."*



## TRAUMA-INFORMED PARENTING AND ASSISTANCE TO SUPPORT A DETERMINED MOTHER SUCCESSFULLY NAVIGATED CHALLENGES TO GET HER KIDS BACK

In the face of overwhelming challenges, seeing the steps to move forward can be difficult. Pamela Maygard had a client whose children were going into Permanent Government Ownership (PGO), and it is always tremendously difficult to get children back to the parents in this situation. The woman was a single mother with four children, working full-time and struggling to cope with her own past trauma. She badly wanted to have her children in her life, but was under financial hardships and had difficulty meeting the expectations that Children's Services (CS) had for her.

"She was traveling 3.5 hours one way to visit her children, and did not feel financially supported by CS," Pamela says. "She was expected to provide them with a healthy meal, but how could she make it and transport it? She wasn't doing well and had been involved with CS for quite some time."

Pamela worked to connect with the mother and engage in supportive activities together. The first step was helping the mother see the importance of taking care of herself. CS helped connect her to a therapist to understand and address her own trauma. This helped the mother understand the emotional neglect she had personally been through and how she was repeating that with her children. She realized that she needed to be present for her kids and less focused on her own attachment needs when she was with them. Through this step, she

began to regain the belief that she could be a good, dependable mother.

"A thing that was really important for her was just to feel supported," Pamela says. "To feel heard that she loves her kids, to understand that she's doing the best that she could."

Pamela provided practical support to help the mother advocate for herself and overcome barriers that were impacting her ability to get her children back, like helping organize and clean her house as well as planning meals when she went to visit her kids. These may seem like straightforward activities, but for a single parent who was working full time and confronting their personal trauma, they were daunting tasks, especially for someone who already thought so poorly of their self worth. Pamela connected her with financial counselling, taught her how to do laundry, helped her get a vacuum, and found her a crock pot for cooking. Through donations, they also got a coffee maker for the mother because they knew how much she loved the beverage.

"She was so thankful and grateful that we even thought about her," says Pamela. "The little things in taking care of her emotionally and treating her like she mattered, it made quite an impact."

Pamela says the mother harnessed this feeling and made great strides. Eventually the kids could come visit

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her for the weekend. The mother took the initiative to clean her house. With Pamela's support she was able to get her kids into school. And then, her kids were officially returned to her care. Pamela notes that it is very rare for children to be returned to their family after going into PGO, highlighting just how much the determined mother had progressed.

"The most important thing is relationships, and the whole team

worked together to provide this for her," says Pamela. Supporting the mother through practical activities such as cleaning, assisting with appointments to see her kids, and connecting her to counselling helped the mother build her own self-esteem and focus on the wellbeing of her children. "Everybody needs to feel supported in a caring and compassionate manner. We reminded her she could do it and you have to be consistent with hope."

**Employee:** Pamela Maygard

Parent Consultant | WJS Family Intervention Program, Alberta



*"Everybody needs to feel supported in a caring and compassionate manner. We reminded her she could do it and you have to be consistent with hope."*

