

# Community Update

2019–2021









# Community Update

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### Contents

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Message from our Executive Directors .....	4
Message from our Board Chair .....	8
Our Mission .....	10
<i>Prevention</i> .....	11
<i>Intervention</i> .....	12
Program Highlights	
<i>TSIL</i> .....	13
<i>UBUNTU</i> .....	14
<i>MOAT</i> .....	15
<i>Sakihta Kikinaw at Stovel Block</i> .....	16
COVID–19 Response .....	17

# 1 Message from our Executive Directors

**Boyle Street** Community Services is honoured to do our work on Treaty 6 Territory, a traditional gathering place for diverse Indigenous peoples including the Cree, Blackfoot, Métis, Nakota Sioux, Iroquois, Dene, Ojibway/Saulteaux/Anishinaabe, Inuit, and many others whose histories, languages, and cultures continue to influence and enrich our community and our organization.

Being on Treaty 6 Territory also compels us to understand our collective responsibility to honour the spirit and intent of Treaty 6. As an organization, roughly 75% of the people we serve are First Nation, Inuit or Metis. This speaks to the unconscionable over-representation of Indigenous people experiencing homelessness and interacting with Children Services (now sitting at 69%). The responsibility to honour Treaty 6 and live up to the call for Reconciliation is something that we strive toward, despite many failures along the way.

This past year was difficult for everyone, but especially for those we serve who are put most at risk in society. In particular, this year was marked by:

- *A pandemic that disproportionately impacted people living with a low income;*
- *A heightened awareness of the systemic racism faced by our clients and staff team who are Indigenous, Black or Persons of Colour, including the continued killing of individuals by people who were sworn to protect them;*
- *An ongoing opioid crisis that saw overdose deaths continue unabated, and even spike among our most vulnerable neighbours; and*
- *Heightened challenges around income, housing and food insecurity.*

These challenges are layered on top of incredibly difficult circumstances those we serve were already facing. But it is not just these crises that define our year, it is the response. First, it is the awe-inspiring resiliency of those we serve.



# 1 Message from our Executive Directors



A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink.

**Jordan Reiniger** (he/him),  
Executive Director

The family struggling to have enough technology to keep their kid's studies going when everyone was sent home, while also having to figure out whether they will pay their rent or buy food. But when they went to access our C5 Food Hampers, ensuring they only take what they need so other families can also have enough.

Or, the man experiencing homelessness, and in a day has everything he relies on for survival closed due to the pandemic. But in the face of all he is experiencing, sees a friend on the street who is cold and gives his friend his own jacket.

It's the response of our Boyle Street staff team, who had all the same challenges everyone else was facing and decided with great compassion, dedication and skill to serve when and where they were needed most. In a matter of hours, they figured out how to shift their way of working to meet people where they were at and how they needed it most.

It's the response of our community. The individuals and businesses who reached out to ask how they could support with time, donations, food – whatever was most needed – even as they were also struggling in pandemic.

# 1 Message from our Executive Directors

Centre for Newcomers, Norwood Child and Family Resource Centre and Terra Centre – and in the process deepened our partnership. We leveraged existing relationships to forge new partnerships to stand up the Edmonton Expo Centre in short order and bring new housing supports online at the Coliseum Inn.

While we continued to keep on eye on the most immediate needs of an ever-evolving situation, we also kept an eye to the long term. We began thinking about our purpose as an organization and sharpened our strategic focus to re-orient and shape how we emerge from these crises. Our new Purpose Statement and Strategic Plan are the result of that work. Thanks to the visionary leadership of Julian Daly, who left Boyle Street in October of 2019, our organization was in a strong position financially and organizationally to handle the challenges that emerged this year. Thanks to strength of our team, we are well positioned to continue serving our community into the future.

It is our great honour to work alongside  
such an incredible group of people.

# 1 Message from our Executive Directors

Many challenges still lie ahead. By working together collectively – with those we serve, our incredible staff team, and our agency and community partners – we will continue to live one of our values that we have carried throughout this past year: “Despite great challenges we believe unhealthy cycles can be broken, new opportunities created and, through healing, health restored.”

Thank you to everyone who contributed in big and small ways over the past year. We look forward to working together with you all on the many new opportunities and healing to come in the year ahead.



**Krysta Fitzgerald** (she/her),  
Deputy Executive Director

# 2 Message from our Board Chair



A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Greg Bott".

**Greg Bott** (he/him),  
Board Chair

**O**ver the past year, the environment in which we operate has been nothing shy of interesting. Our year started with a search for the next Executive Director of Boyle Street, to replace long-serving community leader Julian Daly. The organization, community members, and community at large will forever be grateful for the compassion and innovation that Julian brought to Boyle Street Community Services every day.

After extensive consultations and a nation-wide search, the Board of Directors was excited to find home-grown talent in Jordan Reiniger, who was awarded the Executive Director role in October 2019. This selection was followed by the well-deserved appointment of Krysta Fitzgerald to the role of Deputy Executive Director.

The year 2020 has tested every facet of non-profit organizations, from operational models and organizational capacity, to navigating new funding environments, ultimately testing the resiliency of the sector. The Board has been so proud of the work of the leadership and staff teams this past year, who continue to find new and innovative ways to collaborate with partner agencies, governments, and corporate sectors.



## **Message from our Board Chair**

**The work** of our organization is needed now more than ever. With the pandemic, we are seeing challenges to income stability, placing strain on resources for food, shelter, and family support. Such instability has led to a decrease in food security, and increased homelessness, ultimately increasing the number of individuals and families seeking support.

This crisis has helped to define the character of the residents of the City of Edmonton, of our funders, our team, and of our community members.

We are proud to have witnessed organizations in Edmonton working together and placing the clients and the vulnerable population at the center of every single decision. Everywhere we turn, we see fierce mobilization to the extent that could only have been achieved through collaboration. This pandemic has been a catalyst for some amazing partnerships.

Our mission at Boyle Street is to end chronic homelessness. In doing so, we focus on two distinct, inter-related service lines and advocacy streams: prevention and intervention. We believe that lasting change comes from building holistic resiliency: mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual resiliency in balance.

While our purpose, values, culture, and core ambitions remain deeply rooted in our past, it is imperative to continually examine how this is to be accomplished in the future. Recognizing an ever-changing environment, and an increased need for supporting those in chronic homelessness, the Board engaged in an extensive strategic planning process. Our strategic planning process identified opportunities such as: digital transformation, practice renewal, housing choice, and partnerships.

This past year has been a catalyst for reflection, and has brought to light the importance of the work of social services agencies in our city.

The Board would like to thank the team at Boyle Street Community Services for their continued compassion, strength, and dedication to those that we serve.

# 3 Our Mission

**Our mission** at Boyle Street Community Services is to end chronic homelessness. Chronic homelessness is defined as experiencing homelessness on an on-going basis, usually for a period of at least six months, to the point where an individual is entrenched. There are typically multiple factors leading to someone being chronically homeless: a history of trauma and/or abuse; struggles with mental illness and/or addictions; physical health issues; lack of community and/or family support.

**The strategy we will use to achieve our mission is twofold:**

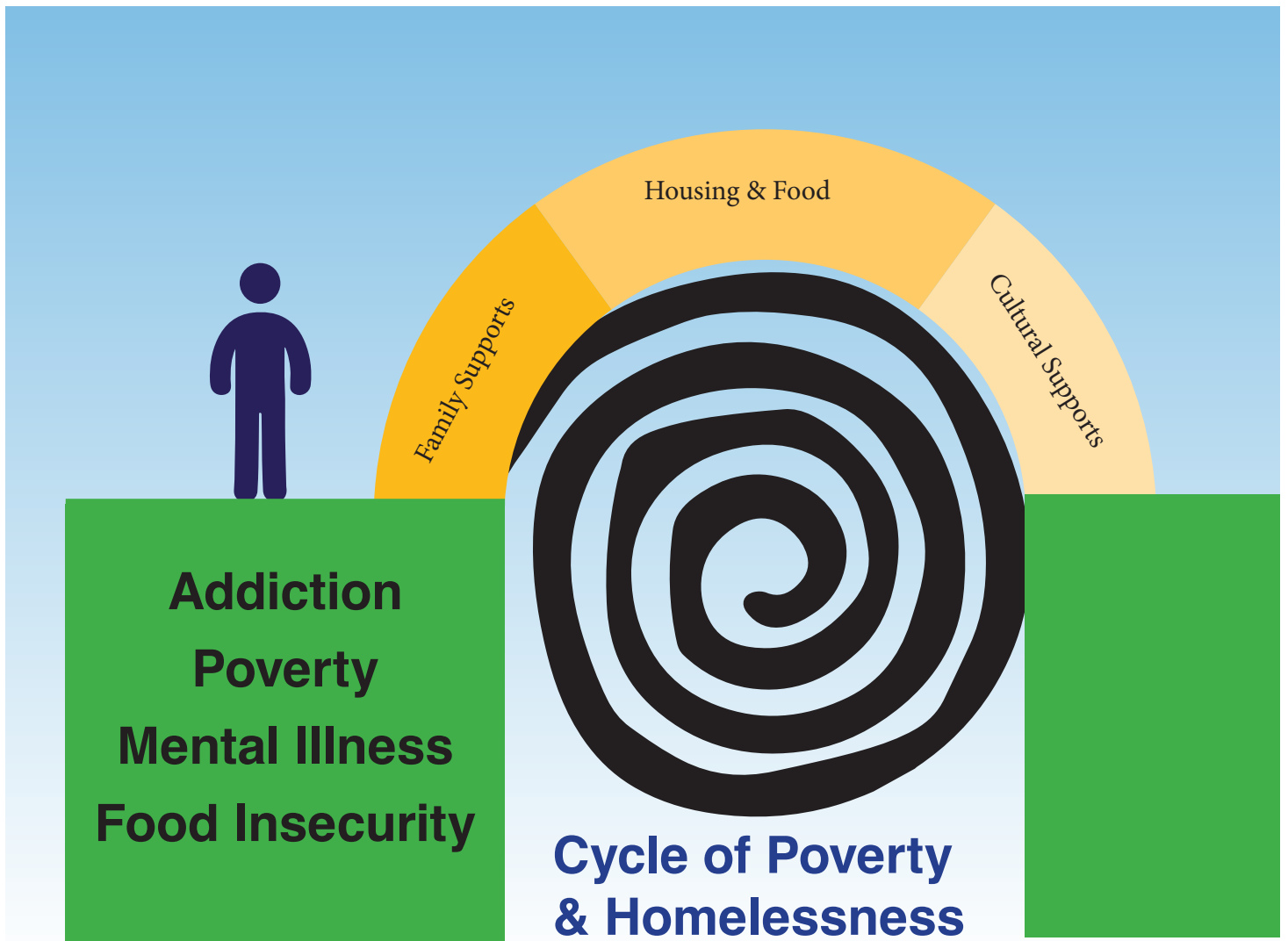
- *Prevention* outlines aspects that are known leading causes of chronic homelessness and works to address and prevent them before they begin.
- *Intervention* supports those who are already experiencing chronic homelessness and supports them to move beyond it.

**Our core ambitions are:**

- *Everyone we work with has a safe place to call home. Everyone we work with feels connected to family and community.*
- *Everyone we work with is building holistic resiliency. Holistic resiliency is defined as a means to provide support that looks at the whole person, not just one aspect of their needs.*
- *The support we provide will consider physical, emotional, social and spiritual wellbeing and focus on building capacity in all areas.*
- *Everyone we work with feels a sense of purpose and meaning in their life.*
- *Everyone we work with needs us less and less over time.*

## Prevention

**Prevention outlines** aspects that are known leading causes of chronic homelessness and works to address and prevent them before they begin.



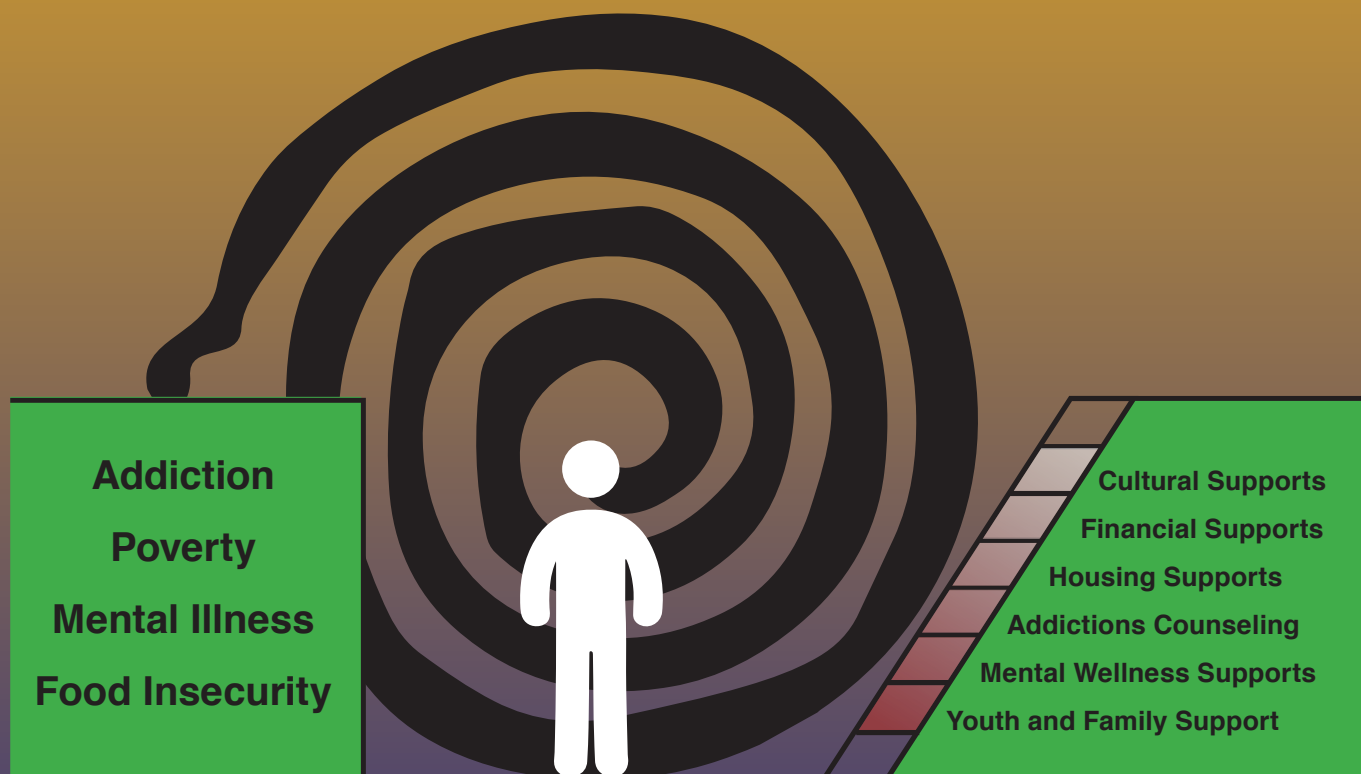
*This illustration is representative of a broad overview of services offered by our organization to people who are at risk of experiencing homelessness and/or poverty, and those who have started to experience homelessness and/or poverty within the last six months; in other words, individuals and families who are not yet entrenched in chronic homelessness.*



## Intervention

**Intervention supports** those who are already experiencing chronic homelessness and supports them to move beyond it.

### Chronic Homelessness



*This illustration is representative of a broad overview of services offered by our organization to people who are currently entrenched in chronic homelessness.*

# 4 TSIL

## Program Highlights

Transitional Supported Independent Living (TSIL) Group Living program is a supportive prevention program that houses and works with youth aged 16-24 from Children's Services to become independent young adults. TSIL provides preventative supports to help mitigate the risks of chronic homelessness.

When a youth is referred from Children's Services, TSIL provides housing and offers a myriad of supports with the end goal of becoming a confident and independent young adult. The program offers accommodations in a three-storey walk-up building, where residents are housed with a roommate. This apartment complex is transitional and designed to empower youth into successful, independent living. Once settled into the program, TSIL implements preventative supports that lead to youth becoming more self-reliant and secure young adults. Supports can include helping a TSIL resident with schoolwork, good study habits, and career planning (including filling out applications for post secondary education, trades school or employment).

Important life skills are taught, such as how to book and attend a medical or therapeutic appointment independently. Menu planning, grocery shopping and preparing healthy meals is essential. TSIL residents are taught how to budget and maintain their home by keeping it clean, being respectful of neighbors, and sharing household responsibilities with a room-mate. TSIL youth are provided with all of these supports and tools needed to ensure a successful move out into the community.

The supports that TSIL provides youth from Children's Services create stability and gears them towards independent living. The preventative program sets youth up to become more confident and prepared young adults, in order to thrive and to mitigate the risks of chronic homelessness.



*In order to maintain the privacy and safety of the young adults who access TSIL, we cannot provide photos of the young adults who access the program. This photo represents two young adults grocery shopping together, one of the many skills that TSIL helps young adults build.*

# 4 UBUNTU

## Program Highlights



*Ubuntu families and staff medicine picking, summer 2020. Medicine picking includes the collection of sacred medicines, like sage and sweetgrass, to be used in Indigenous ceremonies like smudging. The process of picking medicine is a practice that honours Indigenous ancestors, culture, and the land we live on. Medicine picking is always guided by our Indigenous Cultural Supports staff and is made available to clients and staff.*

Ubuntu is a preventative supports program that works with children and families from Children's Services to end the cycle of chronic homelessness before it begins for the next generation.

Ubuntu is a Collaborative Service Delivery (CSD) program that works with partner agencies to create customized supports for children, youth, and families in North East Edmonton. Ubuntu offers culturally aligned, community-based, family-focused and child-centered services. The primary objective that Ubuntu sets out when working with a family is to establish safety for the children or youth so that Children's Services intervention is no longer required.

The pathway through the program begins with a referral from Children's Services. Once received, a support worker is assigned to work with the family and create a plan with concrete goals. The support worker helps the family navigate complex systems, access the resources they need, and helps them create a sense of community in order to achieve their goals.

All decisions are family-focused and child-centered to create a safe and healthy environment for the children in these families. Once a family's unique goals are achieved, the support worker will connect the family with community supports that can continue to support them as a family. This can consist of a C5 partner agency or any other supports that are offered throughout the city and fit the needs of the family. When a family no longer requires the support of Ubuntu, the caregivers have the resources and community supports in place to raise their family in a healthy and sustainable way.

Ubuntu's supportive prevention programming works with children and families to counter the cycle of chronic homelessness before it begins.



# 4 MOAT

## Program Highlights

The Mobile Outreach Addictions Team (MOAT) is a mobile intervention support program for people who use substances. As everyone is unique when it comes to substance use, the team guides clients through a multi-stage process to help an individual find structure in their lives and help lead them out of chronic homelessness.

The first step the team follows is to assess the client and develop a trusting relationship. Once a relationship has been established and an individual is in a position where they would like to address their substance use, the team helps the client move on forward in decision-making processes. In this step, clients self-identify how they would like to make a change regarding their substance use, and work with a team member to decide how to best achieve the goals they have established while working together.

Once they've set out their goals, the client is assisted by a team member to help access and navigate the

services that they have identified.

This can include going into addictions treatment, for example. Once treatment is completed, the client enters the aftercare phase, which can often be a challenging time for the client and the team member, as clients often need a lot of support to maintain the progress they have made. MOAT also links clients to other essential services that Boyle Street Community Services provides, including Mental Wellness services and Housing.

MOAT provides an essential intervention service that helps clients who use substances to identify needs, set goals, and access and navigate services in order to move beyond chronic homelessness.



*Paul (R), Mobile Outreach Addictions Team member, has a conversation with a client (L) in a local café. MOAT understands the transient lifestyle that many people who use substances experience, and works to meet people where they are at to ensure that addictions services are made as accessible and comfortable as possible.*

# Sakihta Kikinaw 4 at Stovel Block

## *Program Highlights*



Sakihta Kikinaw at Stovel Block provides 30-units of low-income housing to female-identifying people who are experiencing poverty and homelessness. The Pope Family and Gather Co renovated the historic Stovel Block building and generously support this new women's housing program. Elder Rose Wabasca gifted the space the Cree name Sakihta Kikinaw, which means "house of love."

Currently, there are limited options for safe housing for women who are experiencing homelessness and women often must navigate high-risk environments to access a warm place to sleep. This need for housing services is amplified by the complications of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sakitah Kikinaw practices a new supportive housing model Boyle Street is calling "flexible housing." Beyond the traditional Housing First model, which houses people for several months, flexible housing is an intervention service that gives community members

a safe space to stay for as long as they need before transitioning into long-term housing.

Staying longer in supportive housing allows community members who are experiencing chronic homelessness and complex needs to get connected to all the services they need to succeed in long-term housing models. Women at Sakihta Kikinaw have access to 24/7 on-site support workers. Individual suites and a common kitchen space allow residents to further develop a sense of community, confidence and self-worth as they work to break the cycle of poverty and homelessness.







## 5 Covid Response

**In March** 2020, COVID-19 was declared a pandemic. The pandemic has created new barriers to physical, financial, emotional and spiritual health across the globe, and our community members have felt its effects keenly. Boyle Street Community Services responded effectively and compassionately and developed innovative new programs and service delivery models to keep our community members and staff safe and healthy.

The priority of Boyle Street's COVID-19 response is that all community members have safe and ongoing access to essential services such as housing, mental health and addiction supports. Our COVID-19 Response Committee followed public health guidelines from Alberta Health Services and Alberta's Chief Medical Officer.

To reduce barriers to hygiene in our community, Boyle Street provided hand-washing stations, temperature checks and personal protective equipment (PPE) to community members and staff. We hired additional janitorial staff and reduced capacity in our buildings while expanding virtual services to ensure physical distancing.

The pandemic sparked an unprecedented level of collaboration across the sector to serve vulnerable populations during the pandemic. In March 2020, Boyle Street worked with several partners to open 24/7 accommodations at the Edmonton EXPO Centre where people who were experiencing homelessness could access shelter and services safely under a single roof.

Boyle Street advocated for a safe space where community members could stay during the winter. In October 2020, we helped open Tipinawâw, Cree for "sheltered from the elements," at the Edmonton Convention Centre. Boyle Street's team led the medical response, data and intake system, and Tier 2 spaces for close contacts at Tipinawâw, helping to contain outbreaks in our community at the height of COVID-19. By the end of March, Tipinawaw provided overnight shelter to more than 5,000 unique individuals and recorded more than 147,000 check ins for the day and night services.

## 5 Covid Response

The service delivery models developed through these partnerships continue to inform our work as we adapt to meet our community's needs today. Boyle Street has opened several new bridge housing facilities during the pandemic to help our community members build the support systems they need before transitioning into long-term housing. We will continue to prioritize the health and safety of our community members and staff as we navigate the months ahead.



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**Treaty 6 Territory**