



Dear Friend,

Addiction affects us all. Even if you have never experienced addiction first-hand, you probably know someone who has.

Since the pandemic, addiction has come to the forefront in our city, and has recently become a frequent topic of discussion.

When we have conversations about addiction, we can better work together to come up with positive and practical solutions for everyone involved.

In this issue of The Edge, you'll hear from Michelle, one of our Harm Reduction Workers. Michelle treats every person she meets with care and compassion, and instills the belief that they can reach their recovery and wellness goals.

For the past seven years, Michelle has received a tin of shortbread cookies from a woman from our community at Christmastime. It's a thank you gift for the role Michelle had in helping her grandson become the first person in his family to overcome a life of addiction and continue down the path of recovery.

You will also be introduced to our Addiction Services team, a community of caring individuals who help people on their path to recovery every day.

Those are the stories that give hope in what can feel like an impossible mission. The job of an addiction worker is far from glamorous, but these unsung heroes help to change lives every day, restoring hope and empowering people to find their way forward in recovery.

From front lines to phone lines, they put in long hours caring for people who start out as complete strangers, but by the end of the journey have become like family members. You play a vital role in that journey. Your support gives hope and helps ensure that we can continue to provide this care to anyone who asks. Because of you, lives are changed and relationships can be restored.

Thank you for showing people that you care.



A stylized, handwritten signature of Shawn MacKeigan in black ink.

Shawn MacKeigan
Executive Director



Support for Every Step

The Harm Reduction journey starts with hope, belief, and humanity.

Feature Story by Glen Cuthbert

When Michelle tells people about her job as a Harm Reduction Worker, everyone has a different idea of what that means.

For Michelle, it's quite simple: "I help people reduce harm."

Maybe it's not that simple, but there is definitely a clear first step on the journey.

"We start by giving people hope," Michelle explains. "Support begins by helping them believe in themselves, and showing them they're still a

human being first and foremost."

Michelle works with especially vulnerable populations. She is part of a mobile treatment team that offers education and connections to treatment options. Her team helps clients staying in shelter take positive steps towards achieving healthy goals.

Many people don't have the means or the ability to access inpatient addiction treatment, so Michelle is able to fill that gap

and make a difference by bringing accountability and goal-based treatment to them.

"Once we treat people with humanity, they can start following through on their goals. For most people in this world that have an addiction, their end goal is abstinence, but sometimes it feels so far away."

Michelle says that the way to accomplish what seems to be impossible is just to take one step at a time.

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“What if we looked at someone and said, ‘Yes, you can do that, how can we get you to that end goal?’”

“Goals have to be realistic and achievable, because once you realize that you can succeed in little things, the bigger things become easier.”

“It can be something as simple as making it to an appointment on time. That’s a step, and that step becomes another, which becomes another.”

Addiction often develops as an unhealthy coping method to manage stress, emotional pain, or life challenges. Each situation is different, so it’s important that each person is presented with a plan that helps them succeed.

“Every person is unique. Some people are similar, but you will never find two people with exactly the same story, so we have to help each person in the way that best suits their unique situation. If together, we can find a new coping method, we can set them up for success.”

“Harm reduction work is incredibly personal work.

People have to trust you, understand that you deeply care about them, and know that you have their best interests at heart.”

Their journey begins with love, care, and compassion.

“It takes someone to treat them like a human being, come alongside them, and say, ‘I’m here for you, whenever you’re ready, even if you don’t feel like you deserve it.’”

Michelle is confident in one specific thing that she’s learned during her time in the field: Outcome-focused harm reduction works.

“Sometimes the journey takes longer than expected, but I’ve seen people move from tents to housing, parents reunited with their children, and even some people becoming addiction workers themselves.”

“Recovery is a lifelong journey, but if we begin from the root and give them belief and a purpose, their recovery can last a lifetime.”



Michelle
Harm Reduction Worker

Addiction Programs at Mission Services

Suntrac Addiction Treatment Centre

*A structured, flexible
treatment program offering
group and individual support*

Addiction Supportive Housing (ASH)

*Provides housing supports and
case management for
individuals in recovery who are
homeless or at risk.*

Outcome-Focused Harm Reduction

*Offering education,
connections to treatment
options, and other associated
health and housing services.*

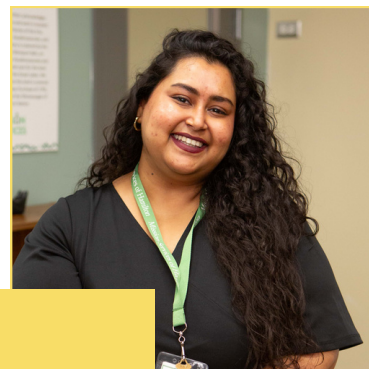


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A Community of Care

This group of Addiction Services staff is welcoming to anyone willing to ask for help

When someone steps out of the elevator into our Suntrac Addiction Treatment Centre, they are often searching for a change.

They could be looking for a way forward to a better quality of life, an improvement to their health, or the rebuilding of a relationship with family. One thing is certain. The status quo simply will not do.

Many times, it's a significant life event that brings a person through our doors. For some, it's the loss of a job or the breakup of a family unit. For others, it's mandated by a judge or advised by their doctor.

Making the decision to seek treatment is the first step towards a better life, but it can be a difficult transition filled with intense feelings and anxiety.

Our staff are there to support each client along their recovery journey.

"Often, as the first point of contact with new clients, I meet people who have a feeling of embarrassment or shame, either about things they've done or whatever is going on in their life," said Hayley, Intake Worker at Suntrac.

"We explain to every prospective client that this is a caring community. It's a group of people who are not going to judge you or think less of you. We're here to help, and we want that help to be open, available, and welcoming to anyone who is willing to ask for it."

Once they've joined a Suntrac group, clients will also be paired with a trained addiction worker for one-on-one counselling, resources,

and support.

Working in addiction services isn't for everyone. But for many of those who do it, it's more than just a job, it's a calling.

For April, who works as a manager in Mission Services' Addiction Services department, that calling started quite early in her career.

"I was working in a shelter as a social service worker, but that was the first place that I really experienced working with people who had addictions."

"I saw the need in the community and in the shelter settings at that time, and I gravitated towards being able to make an impact in the lives of those needing addiction support."

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Your Gifts at Work in 2026



82,069

**MEALS
SERVED**



12,041

**HOUSEHOLDS
ACCESSING
GROCERY
ASSISTANCE**



16,157

**WILLOW'S
PLACE
VISITS**



35,824

**OVERNIGHT
SHELTER
STAYS**



1,040

**PEOPLE
ACCESSED
ADDICTION
SERVICES**

"I knew right away that was what I wanted to do forever."

According to the Canadian Mental Health Association, 21% of Canadians (over 6 million people) will meet the criteria for addiction at some point in their life. The effects of addiction don't just stop at the individual; they also extend far beyond to impact the lives of family members, friends, and coworkers.

Addiction is often hidden away and stigmatized, and comes with a lot of misconceptions.

"When you mention addiction, people immediately think of the person who is living on the street, not your dentist or your

banker or someone who otherwise appears to be outwardly successful," said Greg, Director of Addiction Services.

"...we'll be here to support you every step of the way."

"Our addiction programs see people from all walks of life. We are an option for people who are working and want to be able to deal with their addiction while continuing to navigate their lives."

Mission Services has offered addiction programming for over 40 years, and has seen

thousands of lives changed forever during that time.

"We celebrate the small wins as well as the big wins," said April. "If someone is willing to open up and begin working on their recovery journey, that's always a win. Taking that first step is so important."

"Every recovery journey has its ups and downs," she continued. "Along the way, there may be falls and slips, but eventually, if you keep climbing, you will get there, and we'll be here to support you every step of the way." ↻

Your generosity enables us to offer programs that give hope and change lives. You can support these programs by calling 905-528-4211 ext. 3113 or by visiting mission-services.com.



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