



McMan

McMan Calgary & Area  
Report to the Community  
2015-16

## Message from the Executive Director

Dear friends and supporters,

Last year marked a significant milestone in our organization's history: 40 years of supporting vulnerable children, youth and families in communities across our province. As we look towards the coming year and consider the more than 1,200 individuals who will access our services, it is vital that our agency continue to focus on our strategic direction to enhance our service delivery, expand service delivery to meet growing needs and grow our expertise to create better and lasting outcomes for our clients.

Responding to community needs and addressing gaps in services ensures that children, youth and families receive the support they need; whatever that may be. This is only possible with the support of our funders, donors, volunteers and community supporters who share our belief that everyone matters and everyone has the right to access support and experience belonging.

Thank you to all those who continue to support our programs and services that evoke positive changes and improve the quality of our community.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Soraya Saliba".

Soraya Saliba, MA, RSW

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**“McMan has helped me feel like I am capable of living my own life. I got through a lot here and I’m proud of where I am now.”**

**– Maddy, youth housing client**



# Making Grandma Proud

**High Fidelity Wraparound program participants are enabled to identify a team of helpers in their lives who then support them in achieving their goals.**



Our programs and services are focused on providing individuals with a voice. Every positive choice leads to another, empowering individuals for long term success.

Some say it takes about thirty days to form or break a habit. As a client in the High Fidelity Wraparound program, Robbie spent his first thirty days working to identify people in his life, both past and present, that he wanted as supports. And as it turns out, there were a lot of them. Despite this, Robbie still wasn't sure whether wraparound could help. "I'd been in meetings before and they had always been such a negative experience for me, people telling me what to do and me left feeling angry and out of control. Three different anger management courses didn't work, so you get the idea," he says with a laugh.

But something felt different this time. Robbie found himself at the centre of a group of up to 15 people at times, ranging from teachers, camp counsellors from his youth, friends and his probation officer, all looking to help him set goals and build healthy relationships. Most importantly, for the first time, Robbie was taking personal accountability for his actions, asking for help and making positive choices with the help of his team.

**"I can remember her telling me she was afraid of any of my friends knowing where we lived; I was a danger to myself and to all those around me."**

This was a complete turnaround from the young man, who at just 15, was kicked out of his grandmother's house because she feared for her own safety given Robbie's risky sex and drug behavior. Living on the streets and on the verge of

being kicked out of alternative high school, it was this rock bottom that inspired Robbie's climb back up. What followed over the next few years were assessments and supports to manage his Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, transitioning to independent living with a supportive roommate and focusing on his strengths to see how finishing high school could become more manageable.

Since joining the wraparound program, Robbie's grandmother has passed away and some of those painful memories still linger. "I can remember her telling me she was afraid of any of my friends knowing where we lived; I was a danger to myself and to all those around me."

"These were my grandmother's favorite," says Robbie, as he notices a mural of sunflowers. After a few pictures, where his infectious smile fills the frame, he shares: "It's all about goals you know, and for me, I still have my rocky moments but for once, I'm living the life my grandmother would have wanted for me."



# Calgarians Step up for those Down and Out

What began 25 years ago as a holiday appeal by Calgary Herald staff to support those in need in our city, has grown to support numerous local charities annually as part of the Calgary Herald Christmas Fund campaign. McMan Calgary & Area was honoured to be selected as one of 14 recipients of the 2015 campaign, with nearly \$100,000 being donated to our Calgary Young Offender Center Community Reintegration Program. Each year, the program works with more than 30 youth as they re-integrate back into community following justice involvement. Donations like these ensure that the much needed support these young and vulnerable individuals need is available to ensure a successful transition back to the community. This includes housing supports, health care access, providing for basic needs and support for their education, vocation and recreation needs.



## Youth Work to Develop Better Techniques



“Whenever you start working with youth and you’re addressing mental health challenges, there is always an element of blame and shame that starts to creep in,” shares clinician Mabel Reimer, who works with youth in housing and youth outreach programs. A \$20,000 donation from Fran and Andy Porter allowed for the start of a new program that would be an open forum for growth, where there was no judgement and youth could gain the skills they needed to build resiliency and thrive.

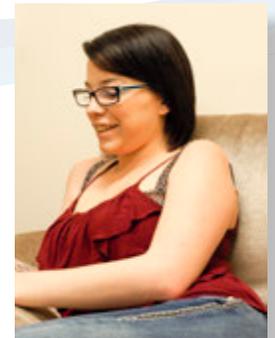
This pilot program addresses the significant need for timely support for youth affected by mental health challenges; specifically Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD). BPD is a condition that the Porters are all too familiar with, having watched their daughter, Colleen, struggle with it for years before taking her own life. Fran has since written a book chronicling their family’s journey

through BPD and the family continues to donate all proceeds to fund expanded mental health supports for youth, like their daughter, who often struggle just to survive without affordable and timely access to supports.

This past year, the first Developing Better Techniques skills training program was offered, which supported 12 youth in learning how to regulate their emotions, maintain positive relationships, tolerate distress, practice mindfulness and develop their interpersonal skills. The program is based on the principles of Dialectical Behavioural Therapy, developed by Marsha Linehan, which is considered to be the most effective treatment available for BPD and similar cognitive behavior disorders.

Each week, participants were introduced to, and practiced, a new skill which would build from one to the other. “Over the course of 10 weeks, these youth started to build a tool kit of techniques, arming them to not just cope with their day-to-day, but have positive interactions with peers, family and their community,” says Mabel.

One such participant was Jessica, who was court ordered to attend pending her release from hospital following a suicide attempt. Jessica’s transformation has been significant. “For me, the biggest thing I’ve learned is just how to talk about my feelings.” From a girl who used to lash out, scream in people’s faces and passively aggressively sabotage her personal relationships, Jessica now feels she has the tools to deal with whatever life throws at her; which right now includes school, maintaining relationships with her children and ensuring she takes care of herself, both physically and emotionally.



# The Start of a New Life

**Referred to the YTA program, Jeanelle had one last chance to prove she could turn things around.**



Each year, McMan Calgary & Area supports nearly 600 youth between 12-24 years old to ensure their physical, emotional, and mental well-being.

“I’ll always remember that Friday,” says Jeanelle with a smile. “I just remember feeling like I was home and never wanted to leave”. Just nine days after the birth of her daughter, Jeanelle moved into Trinity House, a safe place to live for young mothers and their children while they access program supports.

Twenty-two-year-old Jeanelle made life changing decisions those long and scary days in hospital when her daughter was born last fall. Having tested positive for drugs, Jeanelle nearly lost her daughter in those early days, but was referred to the Youth Transitions to Adulthood (YTA) program and given a last chance to prove she could turn things around. Since that day, Jeanelle continues to fight for herself and her daughter; living sober and building the life she had yearned for as a child.

Having grown up in foster care, Jeanelle knew that was not the life she wanted for her little girl. Neither were the abusive, unhealthy relationships that clouded her own life. “It made me realize that if I were to continue hanging around those people, the drugs, getting tossed around, where would I be? Where would my daughter be?”

Jeanelle is now figuring out how to juggle late night feedings with online classes and finding a daycare as her daughter grows so she can look for work. Being a parent doesn’t come with a manual and a willingness to learn has made all the difference. “Being vulnerable and asking for help is one of the hardest things someone can do and Jeanelle has done that with such grace,” shares youth worker Chelsi, who has been working with Jeanelle since she joined the program. “Going from living in vehicles to maintaining a home and parenting her daughter, Jeanelle’s transformation in such a short time is nothing short of incredible.”

**“Being vulnerable and asking for help is one of the hardest things someone can do...”**

Confident, yet humble, Jeanelle now knows what it means to work hard and see the results of those efforts. “My daughter is with the woman that gave birth to her, that fought for her and I’m ready to do whatever it takes to continue focusing on what’s best for both of us.”



# Making a Difference in our Community

During the **2015-16** fiscal year, McMan Calgary & Area staff provided **35,500** service hours, impacting the lives of more than **2,400** individuals who accessed our services in the areas of:



Our evidence based service delivery across more than **20** programs, ensures people feel **safe and supported, gain resilience, and thrive in community.**

On average, clients received **350 days** of support while working to achieve their full potential as members of their community. Last year:



**48** homeless youth were provided safe and supportive housing



**61** parents improved their capacity to care for their children



**51** mothers increased their knowledge of the effects of drug and alcohol use during pregnancy



**161** youth participated in groups to enhance their social skills and self-esteem



**206** parents with children with a disability learned strategies to keep their child safe at home and in the community

# Celebrating 40 Years in the Community

In August 2008, Amanda Lindhout traveled to Somalia—where she was abducted by a group of masked men along a dusty road. Held captive for 460 days, her international bestselling memoir, *A House in the Sky*, is the dramatic and redemptive tale of survival, fortitude and hope. McMan's 40th Anniversary Celebration last fall featured author and humanitarian Amanda and her inspirational message of resiliency and forgiveness in the face of unimaginable circumstances. Included in the evening's celebrations was a tribute to the four college graduates, Norah McNamara, John Meston, Jim Allers and Rick Newcombe, who founded McMan as we know it today, and a look back at the last 40 years of supporting at-risk children, youth and families. This retrospective highlighted countless lives changed and incredible stories of the power of the human spirit to overcome some of life's most trying circumstances. Following a cocktail reception and silent auction, guests had the opportunity to hear Amanda's powerful story of triumph and courage; echoing the fortitude demonstrated by the more than 18,000 people supported by McMan each year, as they strive to fulfill their potential as members of their community.



*Celebrating 40 Years!*  
*Making a Difference In Our Community*

## The Station: Working Together to Build Strong Communities

Following the southern Alberta floods of 2013, McMan Calgary & Area began offering additional resources to both the Town of High River and the community of Saddlebrook, which was created as a temporary housing solution for displaced residents. It quickly became evident that rural towns in southern Alberta were in need of increased services, both before and after the emergency social services concluded.

From this need came The Station, an innovative partnership located in the heart of downtown Claresholm, that brings together a broad range of expertise and service providers, to offer a variety of services, information, support, learning opportunities, advocacy and referrals. There are currently 10 social services participating in The Station, including McMan Calgary & Area, creating a safe, free and confidential space to meet with community members in need.

More than 1,300 people have accessed services through The Station since September of 2015. They have accessed a variety of programs and services ranging from a youth drop in night, parent and child recreation groups, supervised visits and drop in music jam sessions. The Station's dynamic partners and resources combine to add incredible supports that ensure the physical, emotional and mental well-being of Claresholm and area community members.



# McMan Calgary & Area's programs and support services are made possible through the generous support of our Funders and Donors



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