



TALITHA KOUM SOCIETY

FROM THE HEART

“LOVING OUR CLIENTS BACK TO LIVING”

Spring's annual renewal is an inspiration

The warmth and colours of spring are always so inspiring. As blossoming cherry trees and blooming daffodils answer the sun's call to “spring” forth, we take joy in knowing that the cold, dark, and dreary days of winter are behind us once again.

We also take joy in recognizing how the season reflects our work here at Talitha Koum, where renewal and rebirth are central to our mission as we walk with our clients on their road to recovery.

Just as the sun's warmth is necessary to spark spring's annual miracle, our love for our clients is the key that unlocks their potential to overcome their addictions so they are able to live in recovery. It's why we say we “love our clients back to living.”

The smile on the face of Serenity, one of our recent graduates, in the photo at the right with our lead facilitator, Terri MacLennan, tells the story! What happiness! What joy! Also in this edition of our newsletter, you'll find an inspiring story of another of our graduates, Candi, who celebrated the third anniversary of her recovery last month—a recovery that has not only put her on the path to a new career but has also allowed her to become a mother to her children and an inspiration to all who meet her.

None of this would be possible without the foundations, churches, companies, agencies, and individuals who partner with us. Thank you very much for all you give!

—Mary O'Neill, President, TK Society



Looking forward to a bright future! The joyful woman at the left is Serenity, who recently celebrated her graduation from our spiritually rich 12-Step program. Sharing her happiness is our lead facilitator, Terri MacLennan, a grad herself who is now part of a committed team working together to love our clients back to living. We are pleased to report that we've celebrated two graduations in recent months.

Thanks to our dedicated partners!



It's amazing to realize that, for well over two decades now, we have operated successfully as a non-profit society, relying on gifts and grants for about two-thirds of our operating expenses. Recently, we've received generous donations from groups such as the **Victoria Foundation**, which gave us nearly \$20,000 from its **Sisters of St. Ann/Esther's Dream Fund**. Similarly, **Marcon Homes** of Langley and the **Sisters of Charity of the Immaculate Conception** were very generous to us.

We also continue to receive many services from **St. Laurence Anglican Church**, and we are grateful for a grant from the **Catholic Archdiocese of Vancouver** to purchase a new storage shed. Finally, thanks to all those who participated in the “Make it Monthly” campaign in March, joining with individuals and groups such as **CA Church of Coquitlam** in becoming regular monthly donors. Thanks to everyone!

Thinking of partnering with us? Visit www.tkrecovery.ca/donate

Paying it forward with love



Candi at her home: Building a new, hope-filled life in recovery.

Yesterday for Candi was an anger-filled and addicted life in which she was often in conflict with authorities, a life that was suddenly and miraculously turned around while in recovery at Talitha Koum.

Today is the time Candi, whose story we first told on these pages in 2020, can celebrate three years in recovery, a stable home, and the love of her children.

Tomorrow is the hope Candi has that will lead her to a life in service to others as a way of giving back, of saying “thank you” for all the support and love she has received.

Shortly after Candi, now 38, graduated from TK’s spiritually rich, 12-step recovery program, she explained that her recovery began the first day she moved into Starr House and met Mary O’Neill, our society president who was then also filling in as acting Executive Director.

“She really opened her arms and made it so comfortable,” Candi said.

‘Showing my children the love and kindness that I was shown when I was living with TK.’

Candi became a TK support worker herself, enrolled in courses, and started the process to regain custody of her children. Candi’s six-year-old daughter now lives with her fulltime and her nine-

year-old son stays with her on weekends.

“I’d never been able to be a mom to my children,” she says. “It’s tough at times being a single mom and being the only one who’s providing, and not knowing.” Candi explains she did not receive positive parenting as a child. Lacking intergenerational guidance, she credits her experience at TK with giving her the skills she needs to raise her children, “just showing them the love and kindness that I was shown when I was living with TK.”

Her goal now is to end her reliance on government support so she can “be a mom that can provide for my kids, so that they can have whatever they need.” Growing in confidence with each passing day, Candi is now enrolled in the first cohort of the

Addiction and Community Service Workers program at CDI College, sponsored by the Founding Peoples Support Society.

Candi laughs at the fact that, after a troubled adolescence in which she seemed to spend more time in custody than in school, she is now getting top marks in the class. She is looking forward to the time when she can use her new skills as a community-service worker to help others just as TK helped her.

“Honestly, I love helping people and my heart is drawn to the smaller communities where they don’t have help.” Candi says. “Where I came from in Merritt, they are struggling with addictions so bad right now. And I have lost so many friends to addiction, overdoses, and it breaks my heart. I would love to open up a TK home in Merritt. That’s like a future goal.”

Candi credits the power of prayer for what she has achieved. “As I learn to balance my life, balancing school and work, and being a mom, I’ve always had my faith, no matter what,” she says, “I am constantly praying to God, and God is constantly answering my prayers. It’s a miracle. It’s a miracle that I just celebrated three years sober on March 12. It shows me that God is working in my life.”

“We’re just so proud of Candi,” O’Neill says. “She’s accomplished so much. And we can’t wait to see what the future holds for her.”



2020 Graduation: Setting new goals.

Daily miracles are the fruits of TK team's work

What a year it's been for us! Since January, we have had two women graduate from our program and we now have five women in second-stage recovery! We are also proud of our alumnae who celebrated one year, two years, and three years of sobriety over the past three months.

The first quarter of the year has been busy, with two full homes and stable clients who are eager to have a better life for themselves, their children, and their families. We have also been blessed with stability in our staffing, including six new staff who we welcomed to our team.

I want to thank our support staff, facilitators, counsellors, and office staff for the daily miracles that their work inspires in our clients' lives!

Our volunteers also do wonders with their supports in the form of gardening, greenhouse care, tax preparation, programming, and maintenance.

We welcome applications for new volunteers who have the skill and time to commit a few hours a week for six months in areas such as transportation (female drivers), grant writing (can work from home), fundraising (gala), financial-literacy support, peer counselling, trauma counselling, mental-health nursing, maintenance, and "grandmothering" to mentor our clients. Email admin@talithahoumsociety.org for more information.

This month is the end of the fiscal year for TK and I would encourage all our supporters to continue sending us donations both in-kind and cash. Visit www.tkrecovery.ca/donate. It is through such acts of kindness that TK is able to offer our addiction-recovery program to our clients. Thank you!

—Odo Nkum, Executive Director

We remember Elder Wendy

We were saddened to learn earlier this year of the sudden passing of a special woman, Wendy Coultee. Known to TK staff and clients as "Elder Wendy," she was a much-loved counsellor, confessor, and confidante. We had prepared a story about Wendy before her unexpected passing, and her family said they would be honoured if we shared it here as a tribute to a woman who gave so much to us.

They call her "Elder Wendy." It is an apt description for a wise woman who shares her experiences as a proud First Nations matriarch, one whose hardships, triumphs, and eventual finding of joy now educate and inspire not only Talitha Koum's Indigenous clients but also all who meet her.



Elder Wendy: Opening minds, opening hearts.

And, indeed, at 64 years of age, Wendy Coultee has a rich lifetime of experiences and insights to share with our clients during her twice-monthly visits. Elder Wendy smiles softly as she explains that she herself receives much in exchange. "It teaches me a lot," she says. "I learn a lot from the women." With a disproportionately large number of Talitha Koum's clients having First Nations or Metis heritage, Elder Wendy's visits are designed to help them re-connect with an important part of their lives. For some clients, it's the first time they have been exposed to traditional Indigenous culture. Elder Wendy says she can sympathize with this. She explains that, while her mother is a "full-blooded Thompson Indian" from the Merritt, B.C., area, she raised Wendy never to tell anybody about her family background. Now confident in her heritage, Elder Wendy is pleased to have the opportunity to share her knowledge. "I'm here to support the women," she says in a calm, comforting manner. "It's the most important thing." Participation is voluntary. "If they want to join this, they will," she says. "We don't force anyone." For those who do participate, Elder Wendy teaches traditional crafts, such as dream catchers, rattles, and medicine pouches. And then there are the nature walks. "Walking with them at Mundy Park [in Coquitlam] gets them to open up," she says. "It's good to be outside. It opens their minds, and it opens up their hearts."

As a mother, grandmother, and woman who herself is in recovery, Elder Wendy says her story of hardship, resilience, and sobriety can provide a positive example to TK clients. "I believe that they're going to learn that not only is it OK to be clean and sober, but they are young enough to be able to start over again," she says. It's a belief grounded in real-life experience that Elder Wendy freely shares with gentleness and with love. Thank you, Elder Wendy!

—May Elder Wendy Rest in Peace—



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Our Mission Statement

Talitha Koum Society is a non-profit organization empowering women with addictions to lead healthy and fulfilling lives by providing a home, a nurturing community, 12-step programming, and life-skills training.

Sweet 'dough-nation' supports TK



How sweet it is! That's TK's President Mary O'Neill at the left accepting a "dough-nation" of \$862 from Kat Hiles, proprietor of **Doughnut Love** cafe in Coquitlam, thus successfully concluding the March "Community Love" campaign. The project saw \$1 from the sale of every Boston Cream doughnut sold during the month "dough-nated" to TK. Thanks to Kat and everyone who bought a Boston Cream in order to support us!



The rising cost of groceries is impacting us all. That's why we are especially happy to receive regular donations of foodstuffs from companies such as **Cobs Bread** and **Canada Safeway**, and organizations like **Second Harvest** and the **Founding Peoples Support Society**, whose founder, Robbin Wachell, is pictured at left with our executive director, Odo Nkum. Thanks, Robbin and to everyone for all the support!

Yes! I would like to support the work of Talitha Koum

We are grateful for your continued partnership! Please support us today by donating to help us continue our essential work. A charitable tax receipt will be sent for donations of \$20 or more. For more information, email admin@talithakoumsociety.org. Registered Charity #89054 8910 RR0001. We will keep all personal information in strictest confidence. You can donate online at www.talithakoumsociety.org/donate, or mail cheques to:

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