



TALITHA KOUM  
SOCIETY



# ANNUAL REPORT 2024



# BOARD OF DIRECTORS



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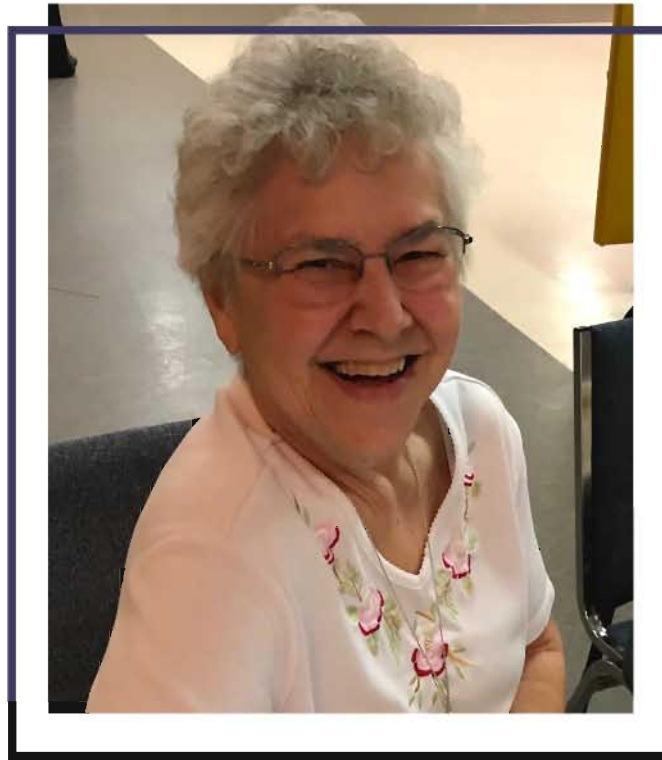
**Sister Denece**  
BILLESBERGER, SEJ.



**Terry O'Neill**



**Jaime Palmer-Hague**



## Honoring Sister Denece

Sr. Denece Billesberger, a member of the Sisters of the Child Jesus order, has served almost continuously on the board of the Talitha Koum Society since its founding. Serving in the roles of Board president, treasurer and director, Sister Denece graciously shared her many skills, talent and love with TK clients and staff alike. Her historical perspective has been invaluable to ensuring Starr's vision for Talitha Koum is honoured. Recounting fondly how, prior to becoming a Society, Starr would talk about her dream with whoever would listen, Sister Denece smiles as she remembers how "Starr spent years cajoling, begging, and praying to help make her dream of 'helping these women' come true." In true fashion, Sister Denece has been a most enthusiastic supporter of both Starr's dream, and the women and children who walk through the doors of Talitha Koum.

Thank you for everything Sister Denece, we are most appreciative and grateful. You will be greatly missed now that you have retired from the board.



# PRESIDENT'S REPORT



As Talitha Koum enters its 25th year of operation, the time seems perfect to reflect on the society's humble beginnings and the joyful journey it has traveled over the past quarter of a century.

It all began under the inspired leadership of our founder, Starr Peardon, who dreamed of providing a place for women in addiction who were falling through the cracks in society's social support system and who needed a safe place to recover and heal.

We have come a long way from Starr's 1999 Burnaby rental home, in which Starr lived with twelve clients. Starr occupied one of

two bedrooms upstairs and while the majority of clients lived on the floor below. After several moves from Vancouver, Burnaby and, finally, Coquitlam, we are now proud to say that we have three homes, all in Coquitlam.

Vancouver, Burnaby and, finally, Coquitlam, we are now proud to say that we have three homes, all in Coquitlam.

We are blessed to be able to operate Starr House in partnership with BC Housing, Gianna House in partnership with the City of Coquitlam, and Redemption House in partnership with Redemption Church of Vancouver. Through these partnerships and the generosity of our many other partners, we are now able to provide 23 recovery beds.

Our current status has not come without the hard work, time, and dedication of many, including present and past board members, staff, and volunteers. We are most grateful for their efforts and the support provided.

Moreover, we are thankful for the financial support we have received over the years from numerous individual donors, churches, corporate donors, and community and religious organizations. Just as it's true that "It takes a village to raise a child," here at Talitha Koum we definitely see that, with God's beneficence, it also takes a committed and supportive community to assist in "loving our clients back to living."

Over the 2023-24 fiscal year, the Board focused its energies on updating the Society's bylaws, replacing the roof at Starr House, establishing a partnership with INNOVA Therapy to provide individual counseling for our clients, creating a Legacy Giving brochure, hosting our annual fundraising Gala after a three-year hiatus, and establishing a partnership with Redemption Church. This, in



turn, allowed Executive Director Odo Nkum to implement a bridging program which not only

required the creation of the Spiritual Director and Family Enhancement/Outreach Coordinator positions, but also resulted in TK renting our third home for graduated clients. It was a busy and fruitful year to be sure.

I would like to thank our Board members who served during the 2023-2024 fiscal year: Sr. Denece Billesberger, Terry O'Neill, Jamie Palmer-Hague, Jessica Spraggs, Maria Tanaka, Sebastian Thomas, and Sylvia Wallis. Their dedication and oversight of our many various projects was exemplary.

Additionally, I extend my thanks to our staff for the invaluable work they do, both day and night, to assist and support the women and children in our homes. Special shout-outs go to our bookkeeper, Diane McConnell, for spearheading the Gala fundraiser, to Executive Director Odo Nkum for her prolific and successful grant writing, and to Program Director Kimmie Jensen for putting in yeoman's hours and offering a rich and comprehensive recovery program that recognizes and supports the biological, social, psychological, emotional and spiritual dimensions of our clients.

Moving forward to the 2024-2025 fiscal year, we will be looking to review and update our strategic plan this fall, with an eye on such matters as:

- 1) Implementing technological systems improvements for client reporting
- 2) Human resources
  - a) ensuring policies are updated and address current needs and practices and,
  - b) ensuring our staff is well-trained and supported
- 3) New Partnerships: looking at ways to not only continue to address the ongoing issues of homelessness, addiction, and all dimensions of poverty (physical, social, and spiritual) but also to expand and provide

support for more women and children in our community

- 4) New Programming: supporting staff in implementing a more comprehensive Indigenous component in the program

**Mary O'Neill**  
Board President





## Executive Director's Report

Last year, the BC Corner's Service heartbreakingly reported that the lives of at least 2,511 individuals in BC were tragically taken by toxic, unregulated drugs. This marked the highest number of drug-related fatalities ever documented by the agency in a single year, underscoring the urgent need for effective intervention and support. TK is constantly at the forefront of this fight and the year's report displays this.

## Client Highlights

This past year, our main program house housed provincial inmates on bail, probation, and CSO's. We had clients from in and out of province. Indigenous women held a significant proportion of our clients.

Since TK opened its doors, the program structure and format first implemented by Starr Peardon (TK Founder) has been maintained. Our program continues to accept clients who have fallen through the cracks and have difficulties getting the support they need. These include women with MCFD's involvement, women from the prisons, off the street, and women who have been kicked out of other facilities because of their behaviours.

We worked with mothers and MCFD in reconciling relationships with their children. This included supporting visitations to their children, arranging virtual visits, and providing needed resources to facilitate smooth relationship building for these mothers. TK built and maintained good relationships with clients' Parole and Probation Officers. We facilitated visits to PO officers and attended courts and mediation meetings with clients.

## Bridge Program

Drawing on both comprehensive research and TK's practical experience, it is clear that prolonged treatment, robust post-treatment support, and adherence to treatment principles are crucial for sustained recovery. The Bridge program (Redemption House), established last year, aims to prevent relapse and enhance recovery success through extended support and a dedicated team, ensuring lasting positive outcomes.



A part of our objective was to provide support for our graduated clients in securing affordable housing, thereby facilitating longer sobriety and successful community integration. This initiative aimed to free up essential accommodation for incoming clients. In March 2023, the board approved the establishment of a bridge program, which commenced its operations with two key staff members in May 2023. The bridge program, now held at Redemption House, was officially launched in January 2024, and its inaugural occupants were admitted in late December 2023.

After one year since the program's inception, I am pleased to report the significant accomplishments thus far. We currently house five graduates in this program and with the support of our spiritual director and outreach /family enhancement coordinator, these women are all successfully employed and/or in school, living an independent life and having the benefit of a strong support system available whenever they choose to utilize.

## Staffing

We experienced a significant increase in staffing resources over the past year. Instead of relying solely on casual support workers, we made substantial strides by onboarding permanent support staff for both Gianna and Starr houses, complemented by a few additional casual staff to enhance operational stability and consistency. Noteworthy transitions included Kimmie's shift from a voluntary role to the position of permanent full-time Program Director, the integration of Kiana, a long-standing volunteer, as a part-time administrative assistant, and Diane's appointment as TK's contracted bookkeeper. Additionally, Heather and Maureen joined the team to serve as the spiritual director and outreach/family enhancement coordinator, respectively.

We were pleased to add eight new support workers, namely Ashley, Melanie, Chennel, Neha, Athira, Melissa, Grace, and Serena, who have strengthened our workforce. Notably, we successfully achieved our objective of enhancing staff training by offering peer support training, confidentiality workshops, routine first aid training, and various addiction and basic counseling certificate programs through the Crisis and Trauma Resource Institute. We deeply appreciate the dedication and support extended to the women and children under TK's care and extend our sincere gratitude to Helen, Serenity, Shawna, Sandra, Vera, Rose, Sandi, Alison, Constance, Sowmya, and Sherry for their compassionate service. Several staff members, including Comfort, Ama, Courtney, and Terri, took leaves of absence, with the latter subsequently transitioning into a volunteer role. It is also important to recognize the staff members who departed throughout the year, including Kitty, Candi, Abi, Kasia, Cassie, Louise, Anastasia, and Kali.

## Partnership and Volunteers

TK has partnered with Innova Therapy to provide counseling services that complement our addictions recovery program. The experienced counselors have shown a positive impact on our clients.

During the previous year, we engaged five (5) practicum students from four post-secondary institutions, namely Spratt Shaw College, Douglas College, Adler University, and Trinity Western University.

The UBC Faculty of Medicine Community Women's Initiative group continually provided essential support by conducting regular educational workshops for our clients. Our organization received



additional groceries and donations from reputable entities such as Shoppers Drug Mart, the Immigrant Support Service (ISS), Second Harvest, Starbucks, and Cobs Bread. TK collaborated with the Indian Residential School Survivors Society (IRSSS) and Robbin who facilitated monthly workshops. We are deeply appreciative of the valuable contributions from our volunteers, board members, and individuals such as Mary B, Sharon, Father Mark, Pastor Eric from the Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Jess from God Rock, and Chris and Val from Days for Girls. Their assistance, whether through gardening, grocery shopping, conducting weekly Costco runs, or providing instruction in sewing and Bible studies, has been indispensable to the success of the women's program.



## Community Connections

We deeply value our partnership and connection with the community, recognizing it as a significant contributor to our success. We express our profound gratitude for the continuous support, whether financial or in-kind, received from the following organizations and churches:

- Laurence Anglican Church, allowing the use of their premises for our daily group and counseling sessions, Coquitlam Alliance Church, The Regional Catholic Archdiocese of Vancouver, along with various Catholic Women's League chapters and Knights of Columbus, Good Shepherd Lutheran, St. Albans, St. Paul's Church in North Vancouver, Columbus Homes (providing a bus for camping), Redemption Church for their support in the bridge program, Pacific Coast Communications, Shoppers Drug Mart Como Lake Village, Doughnut Love, Starbucks Como Lake Village, Cobs Bread Lougheed Mall, Coquitlam Centre Body Shop, Hampton Home Living - Rose Vander Zalm, Immigrant Link Center Society (Food & Household Donations), Soroptimist

We are immensely thankful for the prayerful support, donations, and volunteer contributions received from these church communities and the local businesses.



## Fundraising and Grants

In October, the Walk for Freedom event achieved significant success, yielding its highest proceeds to date. Our persistent grant writing endeavors have proven fruitful, with grateful acknowledgment extended to the BC Community Gaming Grant, the sisters of St. Ann (Esther's dream), the Coquitlam Foundation, the Vancouver Rotary Club, and Project Advance for their generous contributions. The notable increase in direct financial donations from individuals was heartening and garnered immense appreciation. Furthermore, alongside the financial support, we were gratified to receive numerous in-kind donations from diverse sources. We are grateful for the support we got from the following foundations: Vancouver foundation, SDM-PHX Life Foundation, Choi Family, Vancouver Rotary Club Foundation, Coquitlam Foundation, Szocs Foundation, Starbucks Foundation Charitable Fund, Nicola Wealth Private Giving, Helm Foundation, Leon Judah Blackmore Foundation, Blue Mountain Quilters Guild, and Imladris Foundation,

## Future

**Technology:** We are currently in the process of transitioning to a new reporting system app for our staff. We are considering the adoption of a new app which aims to provide support to our staff in their reporting responsibilities and facilitate centralized communication among them.

**Staff Training:** Enhancing staff training in mental health is a priority to enable them to offer more comprehensive support to our clients in this area.

**Volunteer Pool:** Establishing new connections and partnerships with volunteers within the community is a key initiative aimed at expanding TK's supporter and volunteer base. We remain committed to prioritizing these areas as there is ongoing work that requires attention.

In conclusion, I express my sincere thanks to the Board of Directors for their continuous support and guidance. Furthermore, I extend my gratitude to the dedicated staff, partners, and volunteers whose invaluable time and talent contribute significantly to our annual success.

Odo Nkum  
Executive Director



# Faith and Recovery

TK's rich successful program thrives on the important role faith plays in our clients' recovery. Twenty-five years ago, TK's clients' step work was on a schedule and clients went through them with their sponsor. Last year, we continued to guide clients through the 12 steps. Each client was paired with a dedicated and knowledgeable staff who led clients through their steps. Depending on the clients' special situation, the AA, NA Big Book was used. Research and our 25-years' experience confirm the positive impacts faith has in recovery. Our first- and second-stage clients continued weekly Bible-study groups which were facilitated by elders and leaders of the various churches around TK. A big thank you to Pastor Eric (Good Shepherd Lutheran church) and Jess (God Rock) for stepping in and maintaining our schedule when pastor Eric (St. Laurence Anglican church) relocated. Prayers are frequent in all stages of the women's life in TK homes. The women enjoyed fellowship within the community through the weekly Sunday church services and the monthly Praise and Worship evenings led by a team who visited our homes.

Our second- and third-stage clients had the privilege of a spiritual director walking with them in their journey. Sister Heather sought to accompany the women where they were at as they sought to discover their God-given identity and a greater awareness of God's presence in all of life. This was done through the sharing of their personal stories and their lived experiences. The women explored topics such as identity, faith, prayer, healing of self and relationship with others, scripture readings/sharing, book recommendations, Enneagram, and creative expressions as appropriate to supplement deepening their relationship with God.



## Programming

We continued to hold direct addictions recovery-based group learning and therapy sessions running on a 24-week schedule. Topics covered included: maintaining personal boundaries, intimacy, relationships, accountability and time management, building trust, and self-care. God is the foundation of the program with morning devotions shared at the start of the day. Clients learned to build a relationship with God, with self, and others. Along with the individual 12-Step written work, group learning consisted of inner-child work, codependency, communication, conflict resolution, boundaries, spiritual principles, assets and defects, anger to forgiveness, CBT, and relapse prevention among others. First-stage clients are expected to attend 12-Step meetings daily, reducing to five days a week when they reach the second stage.

TK clients participated in weekly sewing classes, street cleaning in the neighborhood, and monthly Cobs's bread pickup. The clients attended TK's annual Walk for Freedom and End of Summer Celebration fundraisers, several TK Christmas parties, Christmas Lights at LaFarge Lake, and Soroptimist Dinners.



## A peek into our homes

A day in the life of a client in TK has not changed much in 25 years. We are very structured and routine-based, maintaining a program that accounts for every bit of time in the day. Clients have a household chore they are asked to complete to the best of their ability. Staff is there to assist when a client struggles with her duties. There is continuous mentorship from the more senior clients and our alumni.

Like a typical family, conflicts may sometimes arise among the clients. Clients complain, argue, forgive, laugh, cry, hug, and make up. This is a space where the women learn to live in a healthy way.



# FIRST NATION CULTURAL INTEGRATION

Indigenous women make up more than half of the clientele and as part of our program, TK invited the Indian Residential School Survivors Society (IRSSS) to offer monthly workshops that addressed topics around reconciliation, healing, and intergenerational trauma. In addition, TK hosted Elders who were blessed with a wealth of knowledge to share and walk with our clients in their recovery journey. In providing clients with the opportunity to practice their culture through frequent smudging, attending Wellbriety, powwows, canoeing, land-based medicine learning, preparing Indigenous culture meals, drumming, and singing, they felt welcome and at home.

We also worked with Robbin weekly who facilitated our Indigenous class where various learning and fun activities took place. Our clients were exposed to presentations on Inuit, First Nation, and Metis people. Clients assisted with invasive plant cleanup around Hoy Creek and Como Lake, fish hatchery tours, Dragon Boating, and Canoeing. Together with Chas and Wendell, the clients learned how to make Devil Club Salve, took part in ceremonies around letting go, learned about the history of the Indian Act, seven sacred teachings, and the inner critic teachings, and participated in cedar brushing, smudging, drumming, and mind mapping. Clients also had the opportunity to attend Aboriginal Days in Vancouver and Indigenous Days in Coquitlam.



“

## From an Alumna

A year ago, I walked through the doors of Talitha Koum, seeking a new lease on life. Despite my initial doubts, the program proved that I was not a lost cause. Since joining TK, I have received an incredible amount of support and unconditional love, even when I couldn't love myself. Their support, the tools they've taught me, and the recovery program have propelled me to where I am today. With over a year of sobriety, the full return of my son from MCFD, and a newfound role as a productive member of society, I am now starting school and repairing relationships I once thought were irreparable. Talitha Koum has not just taught me recovery; they've shown me how to lead a sober life.”

Alicia

”



# Breaking Bread Together

Conversation at the dinner table can be varied. Often the women start with a prayer, before serving food, followed by each woman having an opportunity to share, whether it be about how the day went, what they are grateful for, or what they appreciate about one of their “sisters”. Through these positive interactions TK creates the opportunity for connection, fostering a sense of family and healthy communication. From meal planning, to food preparation, to serving and enjoying the meal, each woman is able to participate in creating a positive family atmosphere with other women and their children.

TK is not for women who need recovery. It is for women who want it. It is a program of action, a program that takes commitment and a daily decision to choose life. TK offers the clients the love and support to empower them to grow and become the woman God intends them to be. TK homes are where staff will love the clients until they can love themselves.

I feel honored that I get to be a part of the journey that Talitha Koum is on, a journey of loving our clients, supporting our clients, and assisting them to find a new life. I feel blessed that God chose me to walk with the clients and staff together, “trudging the road of happy destiny” as it states on page 164 of the Big Book. Thank you TK for all you do, what you represent, and offering the foundation of God in order to live life to its fullest.

Kimmi Jensen  
Program Director





# TK Summer Camping

## Therapeutic value of camping

### What clients had to say about camping

Camping was extremely enjoyable. I was hesitant as I am not an avid camper and haven't been camping as an adult sober. I found that I was able to let my guard down and enjoy laughter and vulnerability with the other women. Being in nature was therapeutic and it was nice to really be able to appreciate the beauty and outdoors.  
Bonnie

Camping was rejuvenating and grounding. I was able to strengthen my connection with God through gratitude as I had a lot of time to look and truly see all the blessings and lessons I have been granted in my life journey thus far. I have a new appreciation for Talitha Koum and all the hard work, love, and care they bring to the women and children's lives alike.

The highlight was how much excitement and laughter I could enjoy while sober! Fun in recovery is so important. From paddle boarding to singing and dancing with my family of the heart to jumping off the rope swing with the program director, Kimmie and Mary. There were countless opportunities that made my heart sing.

- Raven

It has been suggested that 'In every walk with nature, one receives far more than one seeks.' The veracity of this statement became evident following our second annual camping trip in early August. Camping was a customary practice in the formative years of the organization and has been reinstated due to its influential role in the restorative processes of our clients. Many of the women have prior experience living in tents during their active addiction. Spending five days in tents alongside our staff and alumni, while maintaining sobriety, affords the women an opportunity to derive solace from nature and establish wholesome connections. This offers them a prospect to convalesce from the adversity of their previous experiences in tents.



# Counseling



Tony  
Knorr  
RCC



Glory  
Mulera  
RCC



Marni  
Turner  
RCC

Innova Therapy Inc. is in partnership with Talitha Koum to provide counseling that complements Talitha Koum's invaluable addictions recovery program. Our counselors are experienced in addictions treatment and recovery in mental health settings, recovery homes, and community agencies.

In working with the Talitha Koum women, our counselors take a client-centered and trauma-informed approach that validates the struggles and challenging journeys that the women have embarked on. Our counselors support these women with the commitment they have made and meet them wherever they are at in their recovery. Each woman tells a very personal story of trauma and pain, but also of perseverance and resilience. Each narrative speaks of overcoming many obstacles along their path. While we help these clients regain their identity, self-image, self-confidence, and self-worth, we are also profoundly inspired by their determination to reconstruct and reclaim their lives. Clients are unconditionally accepted, there is no judgment, criticism or blame. We firmly believe there is courage, pride, and honor in accepting responsibility for past mistakes and the wrong turns we may have taken in life.

As clients progress in their 12-Step program, we are supportive and adjust our counseling focus accordingly to meet their specific needs at that point of their journey. We have started to provide walk-and-talk therapy as an option, as this addresses both the mental health and physiological needs of some clients. We are also excited to explore the possibility of providing other forms of therapy, such as equine-assisted therapy, in the future.

Christina Radziejewski, RCC  
Clinical Director & Founder  
Innova Therapy Inc.



# Redemption Experience

The Bridge program has served as a crucial stepping stone for me to regain my independence and feel more grounded. The ongoing support I've received from the team, including an outreach worker and a spiritual advisor, has helped me develop the confidence to reintegrate into mainstream daily life. Participating in the program has given me the stability I need to succeed in my recovery.

## Serena Alumna

This past June I graduated from Talitha Koum and was so grateful they had somewhere for me to live after. It became very overwhelming to think of what I was going to do after graduating and how I was going to transition back into society after being in such a safe space. I learned a lot of useful life skills throughout their program like how to cook, how to budget for groceries, how to manage my time, along with a whole bunch of other things; the list goes on.

I have found that so many of the things I once thought were silly or unnecessary for me to be doing while in treatment became the most resourceful skills that I use today. I am so grateful for all those rules I never understood as they have played a huge part in my recovery process.

I am so grateful to be living at Redemption House with other women who share the same desire to remain clean and sober.

## Jodie Alumna

My experience at the Redemption House has been great. After going through the first- and second-stage houses and learning how to live life again after addiction, I acquired basic life skills and am now able to apply these skills while living at Redemption House. This has truly been a blessing for me. If Redemption House wasn't available after my graduation, I believe I wouldn't have been able to continue my recovery, as it would have been too stressful for me to be on my own so soon after graduating. Talitha Koum is not just a recovery house; you become part of the family, and the support given every step of the way, from start to finish and even after, has been a true blessing. I am so grateful and honored to have been a part of it.

## Tasha Alumna



## Outreach and Family Enhancement

## Client testimonials highlight the positive impact of TK Outreach.

Naturally transitioning from addiction to recovery can be extremely challenging, and individuals often struggle to find the courage to embrace life fully and pursue their dreams. TK's Outreach and Family Enhancement program plays a crucial role in providing support in these areas.

In the past year, TK has made significant strides in helping clients navigate through various challenges. This included supporting 14 clients with filing 41 income tax forms, assisting 16 clients with BC Housing applications, and facilitating the approval of four clients' Persons with Disability (PWD) applications. In addition, TK has supported 10 clients with their resumes, resulting in six clients securing jobs. Furthermore, three clients were assisted in gaining admission to various colleges to further their education.

"I'm excelling in various areas like school, work, government assistance, taxes, and housing, thanks to TK outreach support. I truly can't imagine where I would be without it."

"TK Outreach has been instrumental in supporting me through the daunting task of college applications, finding funding, and providing the moral support needed to persevere."

Regarding family enhancement, TK has offered invaluable emotional support and resources to several clients' and alumnae's families during challenging times. TK is actively working on creating a database of its alumnae and their families to ensure continuous support and resilient recovery.

Maureen Bennie-Boakye  
Outreach and Family Enhancement  
Coordinator



# Breaking the Cycle of Addiction in the Family

## Looking forward to a brighter future



Graduate Wanda: "This calm and peacefulness—it's just so beautiful."

Wanda W remembers the conversation well. She was talking last year with a woman she had met during her stay at a treatment centre in 2013, telling her about her continuing struggles with alcohol addiction. The woman urged Wanda to leave her Prince George home and enter Talitha Kourm's recovery program.

"And she kept telling me, 'This place will give you your life back, miracles happen there,'" recalls Wanda, a mother of four adult daughters. "But I just couldn't, I just didn't know how I could leave my house, my job, my dog for six months. But finally, when even my addict daughter couldn't stand being with me, the light came on and I realized, I'm the one who needs help. I can't help anybody the way I am."

Wanda says she called TK immediately after hitting bottom during Christmas of 2021. "I ruined Christmas dinner for my daughter that was living with me," she recalls. "She had this beautiful dinner planned, and all the sisters were going to come over. She just cancelled it because I

was just too drunk." Wanda, 60, arrived at Starr House on January 6 of this year and began a half-year stay that, while admittedly rocky and anger-filled at times, ended up helping her transform her life in a way that she couldn't have imagined before. The key was discovering and embracing a relationship with her higher power—a crucial component of TK's spiritually rich 12-step program. "I feel light now," Wanda says. "I feel like being able to give my worries and know that I am not in control. I always thought I had to be in control—I've got to be in control of my kids' life, I've got to be in control of my life. I've got to be in control of everybody at work, everything around me."

"Being able to let that go is very freeing, and I feel a lot lighter, and a burden off my shoulders."

Wanda says she had "a really intense" experience after thinking about how to make amends to her daughters. She says she was also thinking about *The Chosen*, a television drama series about Jesus Christ and his apostles.

"I love it so much," she says. "I love the portrayal of Jesus as a real person, and I was lying on my bed, kind of meditating and thinking, 'I wish I would have been there when Jesus was alive and walked with him and heard him teaching.' And then I had this stirring inside, and a voice said, 'You are walking with me,' and tears just flowed down my eyes, and like, I realized, he's here. It was just like the Holy Spirit was moving inside me, and I've had a deeper connection since that day." Wanda says she is calmer and wiser now. In the weeks before she graduated and returned to Prince George, she enjoyed greeting new clients and sharing her experiences with them. "I'm just calm, and I'm sitting there talking to them, and I look at myself and I realize how much I've changed and wonder, 'Who is this?' I think God is speaking through me. I just have a lot more self-confidence—this calm and peacefulness—it's so beautiful." She wipes away tears as she says her children are proud of what she has accomplished, and they are just so excited to have their mom back, and you know, to learn from me. "I'm so excited about growing for the rest of my life, and learning, and helping other women."



Wanda: Excited about learning, helping.

## 'Something just clicked in my head'

### Kristen's desperate decision to return home opened the door to her recovery



TK GRAD KRISTEN: Gratitude is blossoming.

On the eve of her graduation last month from Talitha Kourm's recovery program, Kristen can't stop smiling and, at times, giggling with enthusiasm as she recounts the ups, the downs, and her final, near-miraculous, ascent to recovery.

Kristen, 38, tells of how she began smoking marijuana when she was 11, of her use of harder drugs within a few years, of the drug-fueled "rave scene" in her central B.C. hometown, of her struggles to find sobriety, and of her many relapses.

She tells of a tumultuous relationship with her boyfriend, and of their son, now in foster care and whom she has not seen for two years.

She tells of how, homeless, she spent two freezing winters asking out a living by panhandling and selling drugs, finding refuge in a tent and then an old RV. And, finally, she tells of how, two years ago, her mother, Wanda, found Kristen's panhandling sign in a bush and wrote a message on it: "Kristen, your mother misses you." Kristen pauses as she reflects on what she felt when she read that message. "It made me sad and kind of ashamed," she says. "It meant that my mom knew where I was and what I was doing. But at the same time, I never doubted that she cared about me."

The memory stayed with her as the months passed and she lost an attempt to regain custody of her son. "It was really demoralizing," she recalls. "I got really depressed. I just gave up." At the same time, though, "I was praying a lot. And I feel that, through this series of unfortunate events, I realized how God was getting me out of that situation. Because I was burning all my bridges with all the people that could keep me in that lifestyle."

Finally, soon after being thrown in a drunk tank for the night, she turned to her mother for help. "Something just clicked in my head. Everything was going so wrong, and I was like just a few blocks away from my mom's house, so I walked up there and came in and just kind of begged. I just needed a place. I was just so down."

Kristen slept on a couch for two days while Wanda called TK to try to find a recovery bed for her. Why TK? Because it was at Talitha Kourm, you see, that Wanda herself found the strength and spiritual growth to recover from her addiction.

Says Kristen: "So she made all the phone calls to TK for me. And then one morning, it was a Sunday, and I jumped off the couch and said, 'Let's go!'" It was now or never, and she recalls she was so focused on getting to TK that, after grabbing a pillow and blanket, she left her shoes and backpack behind. The day-long drive took them on a detour to narrowly escape a raging forest fire. "It was horrifying," says Kristen. "But my mom was not going to stop. She wasn't stopping for anything. And I felt like God was making this path so difficult for me that I would never forget it."

Gratitude now blossoms from those memories—gratitude for the structure and meaning that TK's spiritually rich recovery program has given her and gratitude for her mother's support. Wanda joined Kristen in Coquitlam a week after Kristen's graduation for a joyful reunion, as shown in the photo to the right.

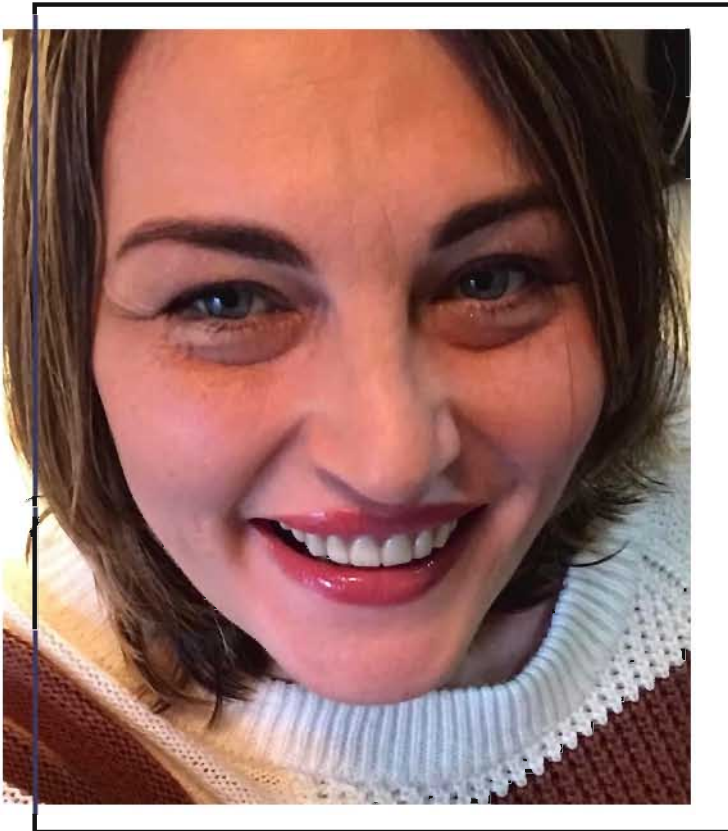
Today, one year after she entered Starr House, Kristen is determined to finish her high-school education, with a focus on upgrading her math and physics to enable her to qualify for an environmental-science program. "I never had much of a long-term goal before," Kristen says. "But now I do, and the support I received from Talitha Kourm has helped to make it happen."

**'I realized how God was getting me out of that situation.'**



KRISTEN & WANDA

# Mother and Daughter



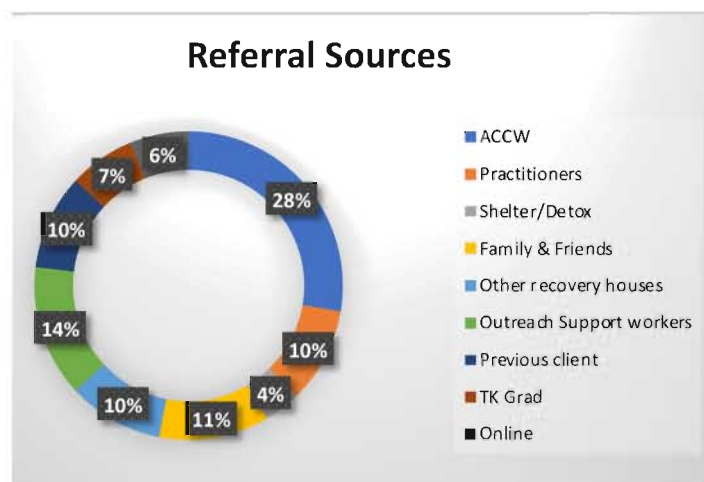
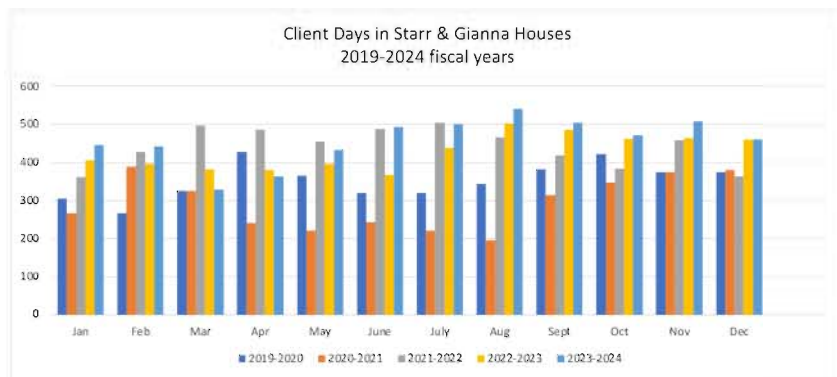
## A Volunteer's Perspective

I have been privileged to volunteer with the amazing women of Talitha Koum for some time now. Building meaningful connections with others can sometimes be challenging, but as a volunteer, I've had the opportunity to engage in personal, one-on-one conversations with the clients while driving them to appointments. Additionally, I've been able to accompany them on various excursions, including a recent camping trip and a fun-filled day at the PNE. Witnessing these women discover the joy of having a good time without relying on substance use has been incredibly heartwarming. Being a volunteer means so much more than just showing up—it's about being a part of life-changing transformations. Seeing women of all ages carve out new paths free from addiction and embracing the individuals they were always meant to be is an experience that brings me pure, unadulterated joy.

Terri Carter



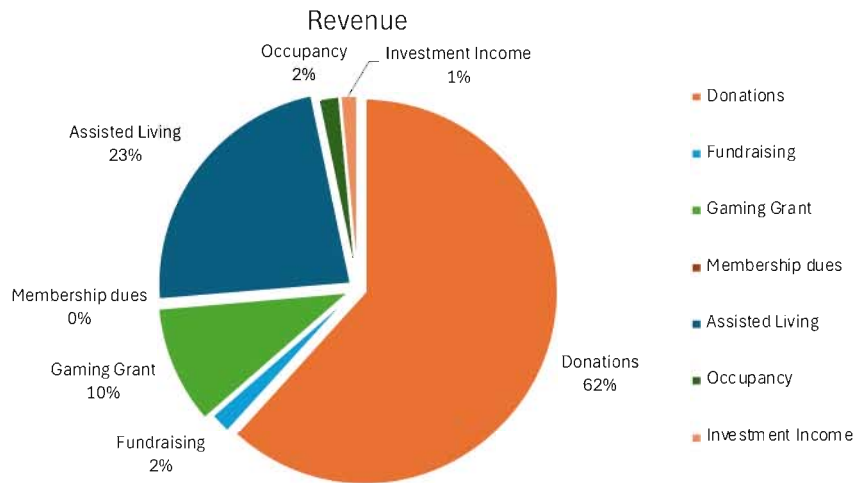
# CLIENT STATISTICS



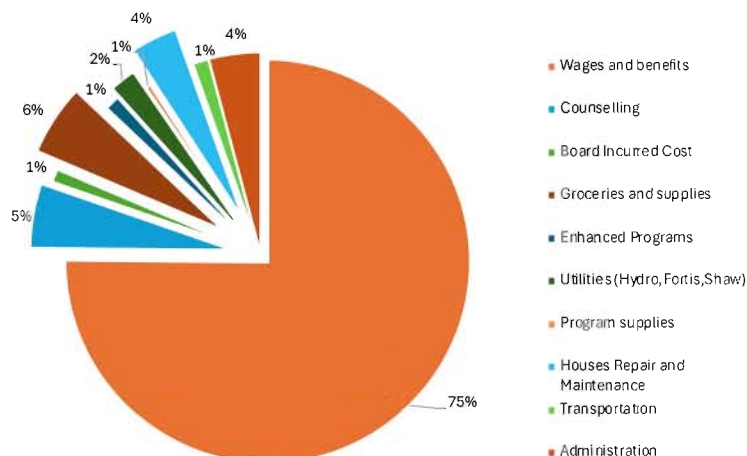
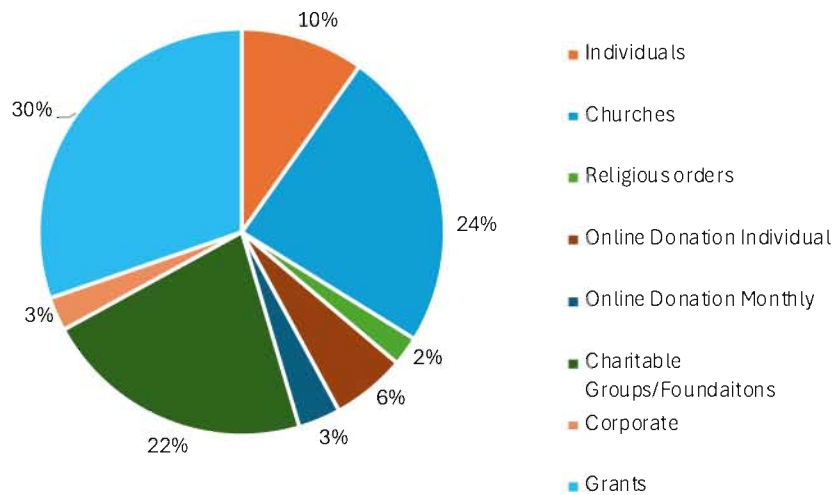


# FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

DIANE MCCONNELL



## Source of Donations





# FACTS



- 63 clients
- 56 women
- 7 children
- 5485 client days
- 16,455 meals served
- 4887 NA or AA meetings



- 5 Graduations
- 11 clients = 1 yr + clean time



- 52 street clean
- 42 sewing sessions
- 8 service positions
- 4 environmental clean-ups



- 52 MCFD Meetings
- 5 children returned to moms
- 179 doctor appointments
- 66 dental appointments
- 47 court appearances
- 51 probation appearances



- 31 Income tax forms filed
- 13 BC Housing applications
- 18 indigenous - 15 women & 3 children



- 225 Counselling sessions
- 378 Spiritual Direction sessions.



# STAFF GALLERY



Serena



Kiana



Constance



Sherry



Courtney



Sandra



Athira



Sandi



Darla



Terri



Ama



Melissa



Maureen



Grace



Helen



Linda



Scumya



Rose



Vera



Alison



Tasha



Serenity



Diane



Comfort



Kimmie



Odo



# Talitha Koum Society Board Members

Peter Markin 2000-2001  
Jim Lynch 2000-2002  
Lila Johnston 2000-2002  
Sherry Vrana 2000-2002  
Annalise McConnell 2000-2003  
Bette Cahill 2000-2004  
Paul Guilbault 2001-2004  
Sue Haynes 2001-2002  
John Zanatta 2001-2004  
Murray Brown 2001-2006  
SisterDenece Bilesberger 2001 -2025  
Eva Gauer 2002-2003  
Joe Cavin 2002-2004  
Barbara Morrison 2002-2005  
Kevin Steele 2003-2004  
Mary Colgan 2003-2004  
Mike Tovel 2003-2004  
Reila Mamnes 2003-2004  
Sylvie Demes 2003-2004  
Melissa Billesberger 2003-2005  
Nico Zdunich 2004-2005  
Sr Georgette Lamy 2004-2005  
Fr. Dennis Alexander 2005-2006  
Fr Joseph Ostopowich 2005-2006  
Lynne Lovick 2005-2006  
Martin Lovick 2005-2006  
Stacey Wilson 2005-2006  
Straker Wilson 2005-2006  
Christina MacDonald 2005-2007  
Maya Kronebusch 2005-2007  
Sister Victoria Marie 2005-2008  
Patricia McSherry 2005-2009  
Lorne Kay 2005-2013  
Jackie Vibe 2006-2007  
Linda Fox 2006-2007  
Teresa Perry 2006-2007

Hugh Buckley 2006-2008  
Kathy Stack 2006-2008  
Sister Lorraine Lemarre 2006-2013  
Pollyanna Sher 2008-2012  
Jack Ong 2008-2012  
Charlotte Culver 2009-2014  
Sara Lien 2010-2011  
Shelly Jensen 2010-2011  
Lorraine Lowe 2012-2013  
Paulo Demee 2012-2013  
Beatrice Mangiola 202-2015  
Doug Downing 2013-2015  
Mary Boucher 2013-2018  
Anne Wicks 2014-2020  
Sebastian Thomas 2014-2016  
2021-2023  
Bob Merrell 2015-2017  
Fr. Larry Lynn 2015-2017  
Sharon Ciebin 2015-2017  
2021-2023  
Christine DeMarco 2015-2018  
John Haylock 2015-2020  
Catherine Kraemer 2017-2021  
Ramona Chu 2017-2021  
Mary O'Neill 2017-current  
Paul Bancroft 2017-2018  
Brenda Beck 2018-2021  
Jessica Spraggs 2019-current  
Maria Tanaka 2021-current  
Sylva Wallis 2021-current  
Terry O'Neill 2021-current  
Jamie Palmer - Hague 2022-current



# **THANK YOU**

## **Corporate donors**

Since making our home in Coquitlam in 2016 we have been blessed to receive a variety of corporate donations and corporate sponsorships in support of Recovery program including:

Beedie Homes  
Costco  
Electronic Arts Outreach  
Harmony Properties  
Marcon Developments Ltd.  
Noura Homes  
Progressive Sealing  
Pacific CoastCom  
Pacific Wastewater Ltd.  
Royal Bank of Canada  
Sashadow Holdings Corp.  
SunLife Financial  
Vancity  
Walmart Canada Corp.  
Wesbild Homes  
Shoppers Drug Mart  
TriCity News  
Hampton Home Living - Rose  
Vander Zalm  
Immigrant Link Center Society  
(Food & Household Donations)  
Soroptimist

Thrifty Foods  
Translink  
TriCity News  
Radius Creative  
Superstore  
Mundy Park Bakery  
Tea and Paper Knook (Soko Tea House)  
Hard Rock (Elements) Casino  
Evergreen Cultural Centre  
Cakes and Sweets  
Browns Social House -Coquitlam Centre  
Dougan Consulting Group  
Art Knapp  
Pasta Polo  
PNE, Playland  
Columbus Homes  
Doughnut Love  
Starbucks Como Lake Village  
Cobs Bread Lougheed Mall  
Coquitlam Centre Body Shop  
Vivio Florists