



PHOENIX  
SOCIETY



2020 - 2021

YEAR IN REVIEW



# MEET THE TEAM

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### MISSION

Phoenix Society is a multi-service agency dedicated to providing accessible services and opportunities to people who face barriers related to addiction, mental health, housing, education, criminal justice involvement and/or employment

### VISION

A healthy community where all people feel connected and have opportunities to discover and build on their strengths to reach their full potential

### VALUES

- Relationships
- Social Innovation
- Social Justice
- Strength Based

## EXECUTIVE



**Keir Macdonald**  
Chief Executive Officer



**Trudi Shymka**  
Chief Operating Officer



**Kim Brazil**  
Chief Financial Officer



**Daniel Marks**  
Director of Mental Health & Addictions

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Seeing this incredible need for free meal programs, Phoenix also quickly moved forward with plans to create a new Mobile Community Kitchen.

The program operates out of a 16-foot food truck, dubbed the Phoenix Flame BBQ, providing free community meals to those who are underserved, homeless or at risk of homelessness. The operation has capacity serve over 100 meals per day (lunch or dinner) up to five times per week.

Since beginning operations in January 2021 this service has already provided several thousand free meals and has been a remarkable success.

# MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO

KEIR MACDONALD, PHOENIX SOCIETY CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

2020 is a year that will long live as one that brought much loss and struggle but one in which we witnessed incredible transformations. This was no different for Phoenix.

April began with our exciting merger with the Positive Living Fraser Valley Society, expanding both our continuum of services and our reach beyond Surrey which had been our only service area for 30 years. Staff were rapidly responding to the COVID-19 pandemic that was changing our operating landscape daily.

The challenges of COVID were felt most acutely in our treatment programs where we faced significant restrictions in how we could deliver services. Everything we do at Phoenix is to foster community and connection, but physical distancing and self-isolation was the mantra. Thanks to our incredible staff, we adapted to deliver services in new ways to meet emerging needs.

Whilst many organizations were facing struggles to continue operating, Phoenix was growing. One of the needs that came our way in April was a request to operate a COVID Isolation Program in Abbotsford to add sheltering capacity and provide safe spaces for people to isolate when exhibiting COVID symptoms. We went on to open an Emergency Response Centre in Coquitlam, a community that significantly lacked services to support those experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

We also expanded services at our Rising Sun site, launching an Aging Offender program with Correctional Services Canada, a first of its kind in the country. The following month we opened Phoenix House, a 10-bed stabilization program, funded by Fraser Health, supporting men who have completed a withdrawal management program and may be waiting to enter a treatment program.

Sadly, poverty and homelessness increased due to the pandemic, causing significant challenges for individuals such as the 38 residents of Peterson Place in Surrey. Phoenix has a commercial kitchen at our Phoenix Centre which was already producing over 400 meals a day. Upon hearing the need and of those struggling to access meal programs, Phoenix partnered with Fraserside Community Services Society (Peterson Place operators). From April 2020 until March 2021, Phoenix delivered nutritious meals twice a day and grew from 3 days a week to 7 as the year went on.

**“2020 was a year of struggle, but also a year of growth and transformation.”**

As proud as I am of all we achieved last year, perhaps obtaining our three-year accreditation through CARF International was the highlight. CARF is an independent non-profit accreditor of health and human services focused on advancing quality of care.

To achieve accreditation, service providers like Phoenix must meet more than 1,200 rigorous requirements.

CARF Accreditation is a globally recognized symbol of quality and excellence for the services provided by an organization, promoting trust, accountability and continuous improvement.

I want to end by thanking our incredible staff team at Phoenix Society who continued to show up to work every day, despite facing some of the most challenging conditions.

Your perseverance, kindness and hard work drove everything we did last year and helped keep all of our essential services open.

I would also like to acknowledge and thank our Phoenix Society board members, who offered incredible support by providing everything we needed to keep our staff and clients safe during these unprecedented times.



# A MESSAGE FROM OUR BOARD PRESIDENT

PAT FREWER - YEAR IN REVIEW

It was time again to prepare the customary “Chair’s Year-End Review” for the Phoenix Society’s Annual Report, so I asked our staff for a chronological list of achievements and milestones over the past year.

As I read through it, it occurred to me: “Wasn’t this the year of semi-lockdown, social distancing, limited assemblies in confined spaces, wiping down door knobs and toilets and desktops and changing out pens and pencils after they’d been touched? The year of working some or all of our days from home, connecting with colleagues and having to trust that everyone was getting their part of the team’s job done, on their own, without ‘supervision,’ and without companionship or extra hands to call upon? And the year when every day’s plan was subject to change on short notice?”

And it jumped out at me - the word “resilience.”

In sports psychology, in personal development training, and in the pursuit of excellence by organizations, this is such a key word.

It’s been at the heart of our global disaster response program during the pandemic.

The foundation of human endeavor is the resilience that propels us on, to get past whatever goes wrong or stands in the way.

Resilience is what turns a potential “I can’t do it” or “too bad, we failed” into “this is just a bump in the road but we’re still on course. Now, what’s to be done next?”

And I’ve been thinking, it’s one thing to have personal resilience, but it’s quite another to see it in an organization of many people. Because when it’s there, the faith is maintained among the team. Each can trust that the other is not giving up, either; That whatever slaps them or us in the face, we’ll just get over it and keep on.

We’re on a mission together that nothing will derail. I think I said last year that Phoenix is unstoppable.

**“We’ve been fighting something like a global pandemic for years, taking on the demon of addiction, and we’ll never stop.”**

So my year-end report will not recount that chronology of milestones that were achieved in the midst of a constant slap in the face. I think it will be published for us all to review and take great pride in. I just want to say that this year showed our resilience, and proved again that we won’t be stopped.

Incredibly, we made it through this past year without a major outbreak at any of our expanding list of sites and operations. And for me, the best of all those “silver linings” we’ve acknowledged publicly about the COVID pandemic – those unexpected positive outcomes from a generally disastrous situation – the best of all for me has been the exultation of the workforce that does the caregiving in our society. The way we celebrated our frontline workers, and learned a whole new level of respect and admiration for their devotion. So within our Phoenix family, thank you to all of you who keep the lights on, the spaces clean, the meals coming, and the group sessions going, even under duress. We’ve been fighting something like a global pandemic for years, taking on the demon of addiction, and we’ll never stop.



## SERVICES

Individuals who received services through our Substance Use Treatment, Transitional Housing, Employment, Shelter, Community Reintegration, Home Ownership and Surrey Outreach Programs.



# 2,173

# 71,611

## HARM REDUCTION

Referrals made through Abbotsford Outreach to health, addiction, mental health, sexual health, housing and shelter services.

# 2,275

## NIGHTS HOUSED



# 142,580

# 1,784

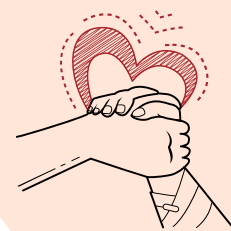
## MUSIC THERAPY

Hours of Music Therapy, including emotional processing groups, one-on-one lessons, and music jams.



## MEALS SERVED

Healthy meals through our kitchen and food truck across our organization and communities, as well as bagged lunches served out of the Abbotsford Hub.



## 'CLEAN STREETS'

Hours Phoenix residents participated in the Downtown Surrey BIA's Clean Streets Programs

# 2,134

# 3,084

## COUNSELLING SESSIONS

Number of counselling sessions delivered through Treatment, Transitional Housing, Daytox, and Aftercare programs.

\*All statistics are from April 1, 2020 to March 31, 2021

Phoenix has expanded its programs and buildings since 2019. We believe that no person should ever go without their basic needs met and advocate to assist all citizens to have the ability to reach their potential.

Statistics: April 01, 2020 - March 31, 2021



# HOMELESSNESS TO HOME OWNERSHIP

## REACHING HOME OUTREACH



**122**

Number of clients who were unhoused prior to entering program.



**84**

Number of individuals reconnected to housing.

## HARM REDUCTION

**1,481**

Number of Naloxone kits that were provided to clients in Abbotsford.



**2,327**

Overdose Prevention Room visits in Abbotsford. 18 overdoses successfully reversed and zero deaths.



## COMMUNITY REINTEGRATION



**58**

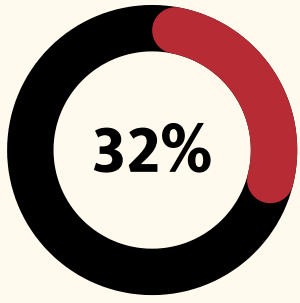
Number of unique clients in the Community Reintegration Program.



**61%**

Phoenix Society's Daytox program completion rate.

## SUBSTANCE USE TREATMENT



Individuals homeless at intake.  
56% were precariously housed.

**305**

Number of people who entered treatment.



**78**

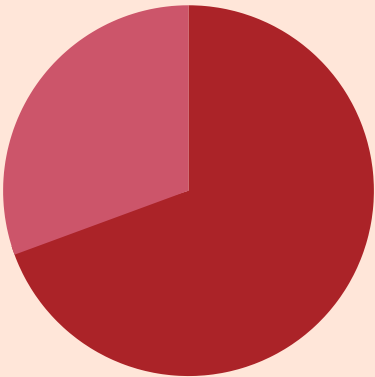
Substance Use Treatment residents who transferred to Phoenix's Transitional Housing Program after completion.

**70%**

7/10 people who entered the Substance Use Treatment Program completed it successfully.



## TRANSITIONAL HOUSING

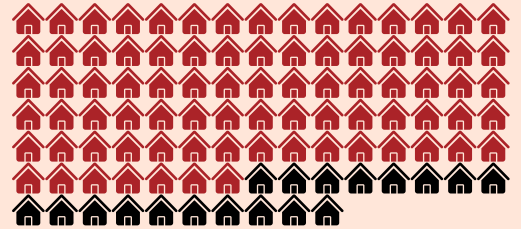


**68%**

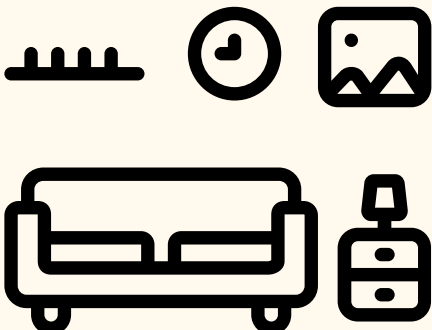
Individuals who completed the two-year Transitional Housing Program.

**82%**

Percentage of clients who completed Transitional Housing and moved to market housing (51 individuals).



## HOME OWNERSHIP



**23**

Individuals living in Affordable Home Ownership units.



**89%**

23 of 26 intakes to our Home Ownership Program who moved in since 2016 still own their home.



Josef Faber at the COVID Isolation Centre in Abbotsford.

# COVID ISOLATION CENTRE

RESPONDING TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The early days of the pandemic were alarming for society as a whole, but were particularly dangerous for those who are marginalized and experiencing homelessness.

"It was a bit chaotic," said Josef Faber, who has worked at Phoenix's 'COVID-19 Isolation Centre' since it opened in April 2020 out of a motel in Abbotsford, serving those experiencing homelessness who are COVID positive or medically compromised, therefore can't risk living communally in shelters.

"We didn't have a lot of time to get things started, so we were thrown into the thick of it," recalled Josef, who was working out of Phoenix's Prevention Assessment Referral Centre (PARC) before transitioning into working at the emergency facility.

"Here we bring people meals, do checks on people every hour, and provide help wherever we can through housing – or even just listening," said Josef, an Overdose Prevention Worker. "We ensure people stay alive, are fed properly and offering mental health support is important as well. The majority of the people here are local, and I've worked with them for years."

"Being able to provide a reprieve from living on the streets is rewarding."

Josef explained that for a time, the site was lovingly referred to as a maternity ward.

"We had two individuals who were pregnant and they've both given birth. One is still here. But we've had many people with mental health issues, some awaiting surgery due to hospital cancellations. One individual had cancer, so being able to provide housing, a place to rest, was so important."

Phoenix Society staffs the site 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, working collaboratively with a COVID Response Team. The facility has 26 suites, two of which are utilized by COVID-19 Response Nurses, and two by Phoenix Society staff including a Case Planner.

Clients are referred through an Integrated Outreach Table that reviews high-risk clients in the community, at-risk individuals who are pregnant, have medical concerns, are missing or abused. Overflow clients from hospitals and shelters are also served at the site.

In the first year, Phoenix served 222 clients awaiting COVID-19 results or needing to isolate, and 31 long-term medical clients. Several clients have experienced justice system involvement, and many have mental health challenges. During their stay, clients receive wraparound services for their addiction, health care, housing and mental health needs. Some medical conditions discovered by Phoenix staff at the hotel have included severe burns, cancer, bad infections, wounds requiring surgery, dementia and pregnancies.

While this work comes with challenges, Josef says it comes with rewards as well.

"It's a meaningful way of giving back. It's nice to get experience working with people that I can help."

**"One individual had cancer, so being able to provide housing, a place to rest, was so important."**



In June of 2020, Sandra Glass had three weeks to rapidly open an Emergency Response Centre out of a Coquitlam motel to support those experiencing homelessness during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"The demographic we serve often has nowhere else to go," Sandra explained, noting that priority is given to those experiencing homelessness who are 55 and older, or who have an underlying health condition that puts them at greater risk of dying or having an adverse reaction to COVID.

The 28-bed program houses roughly 35 residents at a time, the majority of whom have substance use challenges. Most have mental health diagnoses, and nearly half have concurrent disorders. To support clients, staff provide three meals daily, harm reduction services as well as medical support.

"Many who come here have nobody and haven't had somebody invest in them, or show care for them as human beings in a long time. People who are trying to get out of addiction, who have become homeless, have a lot of shame."

More than 75 individuals experiencing homelessness utilized the shelter in the first six months of operation. And the program has seen people move forward: Five individuals entered market housing utilizing program resources in the first six months of operations, and two clients have moved into treatment programs within Phoenix Society. Twelve more were deemed 'housing ready,' meaning they are actively seeking rental housing.

"We've had more success in discharging folks to treatment facilities than we have to housing simply because of the lack of available housing. And most of our residents are on Income Assistance or disability, and the rental portion of what they receive isn't even close to what it costs to rent."

Barriers to housing include lack of affordability even with a rental subsidy, low vacancy rates, difficulty getting out of province or out of country birth certificates to obtain BCID, and lack of wheelchair accessible units.



Sandra Glass stands in the hallway of the Coquitlam Emergency Response Centre.

## PIVOTING AMID A PANDEMIC

PROVIDING HOUSING AND HOPE

Sandra says onsite services continue to be critical for success in improving clients' physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual health as they shift from high levels of drug use to more stable levels. The resulting improvement in cognitive functioning and social interaction allows the program to effectively connect clients to housing, health supports, advocacy services and other agencies as required. Support from the outreach workers provided by Phoenix Society through Reaching Home funding have also been key to helping clients overcome lack of ID, lack of health care, and inability to access counselling.

Sandra said she's been blessed to bear witness to many stories of resilience at the Emergency Response Centre; both in her staff and in the clients they serve.

"The team as a whole has been really resilient," she said. "One of my favourite client stories was a man who'd been a heroin user for 50 years. When he came to us he weighed about 90 pounds, he was in his 60s and had no interest in getting off drugs."

Over time he stabilized, put on weight, and was introduced to the idea of treatment. He came back to the motel after being initially overwhelmed in treatment at Phoenix Society but with support, he returned.

"I love my job. I love coming to work. I love working with a really diverse team of staff," Sandra said. "And working with clients who have such unique individual stories. It makes it frustrating when you encounter stigma around homelessness."

**"The demographic we serve often has nowhere else to go."**

"There isn't one story that fits all of these people," she added. "We have a number of older clients who are in addiction due to suffering a serious injury and being prescribed narcotics and then those were cut off and they were still in pain. And not everybody who stays here has addiction issues."

"We have an older fellow who lost his housing due to hospitalization and is slightly too young to get his Old Age Pension and his disability doesn't give him nearly enough to get into the rental market."

"At the end of the day, this is a temporary program. We just want to help them end up somewhere better."



The Phoenix Flame BBQ Food Truck at Surrey Urban Mission.

# FEEDING THE NEED

THREE MONTHS AND 3,000 MEALS SERVED

In late January of 2021, Phoenix Society launched our Mobile Community Kitchen to serve free meals to those in need amid the pandemic. In just three short months we served more than 3,000 free meals to those experiencing poverty and living in homelessness in Surrey and the Tri-Cities.

“It’s been incredible to see this project get underway, and to see the overwhelming support behind it,” said Keir Macdonald, CEO of Phoenix Society. “Everyone deserves a hot meal and we are thrilled to be able to help feed those in need during what is a very hard time for us all. Giving back and building community, connection and hope is what we are all about at Phoenix.”

The program operates out of a 16-foot food truck, dubbed Phoenix Flame BBQ, providing free community meals to those who are underserved, homeless or at risk of homelessness.

The operation has capacity serve up to 100 meals per day (lunch or dinner) several times per week. On one particular outing, the kitchen served 178 meals in a single service.

Phoenix Society’s Head Chef Prem Singh explains that the pandemic resulted in food services having to reduce capacity, operating hours – or close completely – due to a lack of infrastructure, supplies or staffing to effectively serve those in need amidst the challenging time.

“The demand for food is even higher,” explained Prem. “There is such a need for food security in the community. People are in need of food that’s served safely.”

With our Mobile Community Kitchen, we have the ability to meet those in need where they are at, serving food in safe, single-use recyclable containers in a safer outdoor setting where the guests can more easily socially distance.

*(Continues on page 11)*

**“There is such a need for food security in the community. People are in need of food that’s served safely.”**

## FOOD TRUCK SOCIAL



PhxFlameBBQ



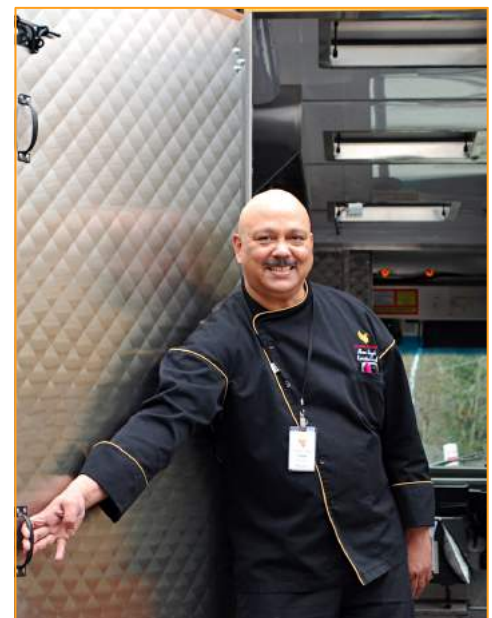
PhoenixFlameBBQ



phoenixflame.ca



PhoenixFlameBBQ



Chef Prem Singh with the Food Truck

(Continued from page 10)

We have served those who are unhoused, our neighbours living in shelters, as well as families living in poverty through partnerships created with local food banks. Our program not only provides nutritious food to those in need but also provides dignity by offering an experience equivalent to food truck service that would be offered commercially to the general public. Those served have repeatedly expressed how grateful they were to have received the free meal service, and it served as a positive experience that was delivered with respect.

"We have served people from all walks of life," said Prem. "All communities. When we see moms, dads, coming with children, and even seniors. The satisfaction we get is seeing the smiles on their faces. When they come to get their meals they're very happy and appreciative of Phoenix Society."

"For me, at the end of the day, you can put it simply one word – the gratification you get by being out there and serving residents in the community," said Prem. "And so many Thank You's we get."

"It's very satisfying."

While the program came about due to the desire to serve hot meals to those who are vulnerable in the community, since its inception it has always been intended to provide employment opportunities to residents in recovery at Phoenix.

Since February, Phoenix resident Raj has been working with Prem in the Mobile Community Kitchen.

"I started with just doing dishes and helping prep. I'm doing more and more. Most of my time is on the truck," said Raj, who has completed treatment at Phoenix and is now in our Transitional Housing Program.



"It's great, the places we go to serve meals, and it's a great feeling to be able to help," said Raj.

"It's hard work," he laughed. "It's been quite a learning experience. But I've always wanted to help people. It has been a great thing for my own recovery to be able to do this work."

Prior to his time in recovery, Raj worked as a dayshift supervisor at a plywood plant for nearly 20 years but he says he's not planning to return to that line of work.

"I don't want to have to deal with any more stress than I need to, so I'd love to spend more time on the truck. I just like the feeling of helping people."

Phoenix Society would like to thank the many generous sponsors and funding partners that have helped make this project possible.

They include the Envision Financial Community Endowment with First West Foundation, Reaching Home, the Surrey Homelessness and Housing Society and Second Harvest.

We acknowledge the financial support of the Province of British Columbia.

**"I don't want to have to deal with any more stress than I need to, so I'd love to spend more time on the truck. I just like the feeling of helping people."**



Phoenix Society resident and employee Raj



Richard P., Phoenix Society resident

# REACHING HOME

INSPIRATIONAL STORIES OF TRANSFORMATION

Being handed a set of keys to his new home was emotional for Richard P.

"When you're living in that environment, from shelters, the street, the tent, the hospital. When someone gives you a set of keys and you can lock the door. It's something else. It was overwhelming. It brought me to tears."

Richard's life has dramatically transformed since the summer of 2020 when he arrived at Phoenix's Coquitlam Emergency Response Centre following a near-death experience living in a tent along a mountainside.

Richard says his life had spiraled downward quickly after losing long-time housing. While searching for a new place for he and his son to live, he quickly discovered rental prices had gone up so significantly that he couldn't afford current market rates.

He fell back into substance use and lost everything in a matter of months. During this time, he decided to detox from substances alone in his tent. After re-fracturing his ankle after going up a mountainside, he was trapped in his tents. In a delirious state, he lit his tent on fire in an attempt to stay warm.

Richard remarkably contacted emergency services and guided them to his location. He was airlifted to safety, brought to hospital and ended up at Phoenix's Emergency Response Centre.

Today, the single father is thriving at his new home at Surrey's Phoenix Centre after being supported by the "Reaching Home" Outreach Program.

He completed treatment and moved into our Transitional Housing Program.

"There was no light while I was on that mountain," he said. "I have my health and I have hope for my future. I will be forever grateful for Phoenix and everything it has done for me."

Outreach Worker Marina Foster has supported Richard through the "Reaching Home" program.

"We were able to take him shopping. He was excited. At the time, he hadn't had new clothes in months."

Richard has reconnected with his son, put on weight and is thriving at Phoenix.

"He looks like a different person. Every day he has a huge smile on his face," said Marina.

## What is Reaching Home?

Phoenix Society's Reaching Home Outreach Program was initially envisioned as one that would help individuals find housing after leaving treatment programs.

The program had to quickly pivot amid the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure it was capturing those with the greatest need.

It launched amid the pandemic in April of 2020, supporting individuals in Surrey and Tri-Cities who are homeless, leaving shelters and/or recovery facilities.

The Phoenix Society program has served more than 122 overall since its launch in the spring of 2020.

Twenty four people were recipients of Emergency Housing Funding to support them during their transition period, and the program has successfully helped secure housing for 84 people.

Outreach Workers like Marina help clients with securing new market rental housing, securing rent subsidies of up to \$450 for a period of one year, completing taxes, as well as helping to replace identification and other things needed to find safe and secure housing.

Staff help clients build relationships with landlords, develop life skills, as well as improving access to basic needs such as food, clothing and transportation assistance.

**"I have my health and I have hope for my future. I will be forever grateful for Phoenix."**

The clientele entering Phoenix's Reaching Home program have varied widely, demographically.

From seniors to single parents, and is largely reflective of demographical trends seen in regional homeless count figures in terms of an overrepresentation of seniors and Indigenous populations.

"It's people struggling with addiction, it's women fleeing violence, it's a whole range. We've had a few couples, and some parents," Marina explains.

Marina says it's rewarding to know she's helping individuals reclaim their lives, self confidence and happiness.

"A lot of them have come so far," she said. "It's good to see. It's exciting to have them get their key and open it up – it's their space, it's their home and it's exciting."



Sean, Nelson, Nathan and Michael (left to right) pose with toques they knitted at Phoenix Centre in Surrey. Photo: Richard Lam

# THE 'LOOM OF LIFE'

HOW A MEN'S KNITTING CLUB WAS BORN AT PHOENIX DURING THE PANDEMIC

What started as an unofficial men's knitting group at Phoenix blossomed into an initiative that's seen an explosion of residents getting involved in making toques for the homeless during the pandemic.

The initiative began in late 2020 when Nelson Mendonca began knitting after arriving at Phoenix's main campus following a stay at Surrey Pretrial – where he had learned to loom.

"Just getting fresh out of jail, I was nervous here. I went and got some knitting stuff and just started making a toque. I went down to a meeting and I was knitting. It spread like wildfire after that. Everyone was asking what I was doing, so I showed one guy on the floor how to do it, then another guy. Before I knew it, it was almost right of passage: To be on my floor you had to learn how to knit," said Nelson.

"So you'd walk into our group and see 10 guys knitting," he chuckled. "Or a bunch of guys are watching Scarface and they're knitting."

The story went viral in 2020. After local media picked up the story, the men received international attention when CNN published an article about them.

By the end of March 2021, over 1,000 toques had been knitted. Some were given away, others were hand-delivered to non-profits like Surrey Urban Mission Society, destined for those experiencing homelessness.

The club helped many Phoenix residents during the hard days of the pandemic – which were particularly isolating for those in recovery.

Nelson and all the "toquers" say it feels good to give back.

"The best part about making the toques is just to start something and finish it and be able to give it away," said Nelson. "In our past, a lot of us couldn't say we've ever done that. It means a lot to start and finish something, and be able to give it away."

"It's like a stepping stone to accomplishing things bigger than making toques."

For Nelson, it was. He is working and has entered Vancouver Career College to obtain his Social Work Diploma. He is passionate about tackling the voids and gaps in the correctional system to help inmates be successful in reintegration.

**"It means a lot to start and finish something, and be able to give it away. It's like a stepping stone to accomplishing things bigger than making toques."**

Sean Brossard has also been heavily involved in the club, and is now in Phoenix's Transitional Housing Program after completing treatment in early 2021.

Sean described the looming as "cathartic." He said knitting is a "good way to get out of your head and into something else."

"You're kind of in a zen, spiritual mode. You're in total control and you're right there in the moment," he added. "When you're with someone and you're toquing, it can be easier to open up and deal with your emotions or shame. Friendships were definitely born in the toquing."

In many ways, the knitting is a metaphor for what happens at Phoenix: Starting something new, changing things, one stitch at a time.



Teisha, Phoenix Society resident

# LOST AND FOUND IN MUSIC THERAPY

PHOENIX MUSIC THERAPY PROGRAM

Teisha smiles as she recalls her first Music Therapy session at Phoenix Society in 2021.

"I wasn't even done my paperwork yet and the girls were on their way to Music Therapy. Before I even went to my room, I was in a session," she laughed.

"It felt like a great ice breaker. Music is so raw. It gives you the ability to open up and express yourself without being judged. You can just sit in your feelings at that time, and be vulnerable enough to share. It takes a lot of strength to put yourself in that position, but music helps you in being courageous and being vulnerable."

This is Teisha's first time in treatment, and she wasn't sure what to expect. She did her research and the Music Therapy Program at Phoenix was part of her decision to start her recovery journey here. Teisha says the program has been therapeutic for her.

"It's my favourite group out of all of them. I spend a lot of time listening to music. I taught myself how to play piano and guitar," she explained.

Teisha and many others at Phoenix Society were thankful the program was able to continue amid the pandemic.

Tears have often been shed in the program, she explained.

Music helps Teisha lighten her mood and process hard feelings.

In one of the first sessions Teisha attended, she chose an inspirational song that her mom used to play.

"It made me cry because it reminded me of home. It can bring back memories from hard times, but music makes things better. It's easy to get lost in music, and I've always had a song for every emotion. It's given me a non-judgmental place to open up and share songs that mean something to me."

Felicia Wall has run the Music Therapy program at Phoenix since its inception six years ago.

During the pandemic, Felicia and intern Ian have offered weekly music jams and Music Therapy sessions, bi-monthly group piano and guitar lessons, as well as emotional processing groups and more than a dozen individual music sessions a month.

"People really thrive on music, and there was limited programming available due to restrictions in place."

"Recently, someone lost a loved one, and in a class was the first time the emotions came out with the help of simple music from a guitar," Felicia said. "The power of accessing emotions is important in recovery anytime, but especially when other things are shut down and you don't have other ways of learning and being in the world."

In the summer of 2020, Felicia and her intern Ian worked tirelessly with more than a dozen Phoenix clients to record an album, titled *'Hear Our Voices.'*

Tim Page recorded an original song on the album, and prior to arriving at Phoenix, the lifelong musician hadn't touched his guitar in nearly two years.

"I knew I wanted to pick up music again and coming here gave me the opportunity to do that," said Tim. "I have a hard time expressing myself. Through music I can communicate what is going on inside of me."

**"Music is so raw. It gives you the ability to open up and express yourself."**



Phoenix Society CEO Keir Macdonald holds a copy of the Recovery Facility Homelessness Count.

# RECOVERY FACILITY HOMELESS COUNT

HOUSING SHORTAGE HIGHLIGHTED IN FIRST-EVER HOMELESS COUNT IN SURREY RECOVERY FACILITIES

In 2020, Phoenix Society led the first-ever count of individuals living in recovery facilities in Surrey.

"This is a first-of-its-kind study and has been several years in the making," said Phoenix Society CEO Keir Macdonald. "We are thrilled and thankful the BC Non-Profit Housing Association decided to support us conducting this count. I approached BCNPHA with the idea of this Surrey-specific pilot project as I saw this as a major gap in the regional count."

While the regional count captures those living in emergency shelters, women and children living in transition homes, those staying temporarily in hospitals or correctional facilities and of course street-entrenched individuals living outdoors who identify as being homeless, it has never included recovery facilities.

The Surrey Recovery Facilities Homeless Count was administered across 30 licensed residential substance use and registered supportive recovery facilities in Surrey, representing 350 recovery spaces (with a total of 192 responses).

Of those surveyed, 68% facilities had been homeless before – 33% in the previous year alone.

"Without access to supportive recovery facilities, many individuals who rely on this support could end up living on the streets again," said Macdonald. "Close to 40% said they didn't know where they would live after leaving recovery and 78% of respondents reported that they did not pay any rent somewhere so potentially could face homelessness when they left their program."

This Surrey count was implemented in March 2020 at the same time as the broader regional homeless count, to help clarify understanding of homelessness within this population. It provides data to utilize in advocacy efforts and highlights the precarious nature of the housing situation of those in recovery facilities, like Phoenix.

"We need data to advocate," Macdonald explained. "This may not provide a complete snapshot, but it provides a better one."

**"Recovery operations need to be part of this snapshot to better demonstrate the need."**

"Housing is still so far behind the need, and not counting those individuals living in these facilities is a huge gap," noted Macdonald. "We hope this count can be continued and expanded upon in future years for the whole region. Recovery operations need to be part of this snapshot to better demonstrate the need. Recovery services play such an important role in helping break the cycle of poverty, substance misuse and homelessness."

In the 2020 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count a total of 3,634 people were identified as experiencing homelessness. The largest numbers of unhoused individuals were found in Vancouver (2,095) and Surrey (644).

The count showed 173 unsheltered persons in Surrey and we know this is an undercount. Greater access to safe, affordable and appropriate housing is urgently needed.



Christina and Ron laugh with Phoenix employee Joshua at their Abbotsford home

# SUPPORTING SENIORS

PROVIDING HOUSING SOLUTIONS AMID THE PANDEMIC

Christina Perlick smiles as she says Joshua Domino “has helped all of us in this house very much.”

“He’s been a companion, a friend, a counsellor,” the senior says lovingly. “He speaks up for us and gives us a voice, he makes us feel safe.”

Joshua is a Mobile Case Planner who serves as a support system for several seniors who reside in a rental home run by Phoenix Society in Abbotsford.

The Sherwood Home serves as a Transitional Housing Program for seniors who are at risk or experiencing homelessness and opened in October of 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic. The home is for moderate to high-functioning individuals over the age of 60 who live with mental health and/or substance use challenges.

Phoenix employees like Joshua provide wrap-around supports for clients including transportation and attendance to medical appointments, emotional supports, and assistance with other basic needs.

Joshua chuckles as he explains that when he began his career in social work, the two demographics he thought he didn’t want to work with were youth and seniors.

“But working with these people, I just fell in love with all of them. Helping them out is very rewarding,” he said of his clients in the home, where up to five individuals live at a time.

Joshua’s role is vast. He helps the seniors with a variety of supports, most commonly health care. That includes driving them to appointments, liaising with doctors, getting clients connected to food bank services, providing basic banking support and much more.

He also connects the seniors with things like optical and eye care needs, and finding ways to pay for things that can be costly (such as dentures).

“One of the individuals has had dentures, but only top dentures, and hadn’t had new ones in 20 years,” Joshua explained. “We found a dentist who agreed to do them for free as the Ministry only pays for a portion.”

Through his work, he’s also helped clients with long-standing issues.

“Another client was getting a routine eye check and they found pressure in his eyes were very high. He had been avoidant about some of his issues, and had already lost vision in one eye.

“He would’ve lost vision in both eyes if he hadn’t received this exam.”

Joshua also connects clients with Nurse Practitioners at the Abbotsford Community Hub that Phoenix Society is based out of.

He says it’s been particularly rewarding to provide these supports during the pandemic to individuals who are very susceptible to serious complications or death if they were to contract COVID-19.

“I am worried about my clients and them getting COVID. I always make sure I’m very safe, follow the rules, wear gloves and a mask. If one of them were to get COVID, all of them would get it, and we don’t want to lose people.”

Joshua says he feels blessed to be able to help people in his role.

“Growing up, my plan was to go into the medical field and I didn’t enjoy the work, it just wasn’t for me.”

“But I knew I wanted something helping people. Even just helping people out of altruism, that’s one of the things I follow – helping without expecting anything back,” he explained.

“Being here it’s been the opposite. In social work they tell you expect a job where you’re not thanked. But here, I’m getting thanked every day.”

**“In social work they tell you expect a job where you’re not thanked. But here, I’m getting thanked every day.”**

During the pandemic, Phoenix Society opened several other houses to support marginalized and vulnerable individuals.

One of these was a ‘Stabilization House’ for men that opened in Surrey in July 2020. The licensed program provides shared accommodation for up to six weeks for men who are experiencing problematic substances use, often in active withdrawal or having recently completed a detox program. It serves as a place to land when people are awaiting or contemplating a treatment program.

Phoenix Society also opened two rental houses in Surrey in 2020; One for men and one for women, to respond to the housing crisis and to provide additional housing options for individuals we serve as they move along the continuum.



# AGING OFFENDER PROGRAM

MEETING A GROWING NEED IN THE CORRECTIONAL SYSTEM

In May of 2020, Phoenix Society launched the innovative 'Aging Offender' Program out of our Rising Sun Villas building in Surrey.

The program addresses the needs of aging offenders and provides a bridge between correctional institutions and community while offering a combination of reintegration services, along with additional medical supports and services to meet their needs.

This unique new program is also targeted to support a population that is lacking appropriate housing options.

According to the report *'Aging and Dying in Prison: An Investigation into the Experiences of Older Individuals in Federal Custody,'* the proportion of older individuals in federal custody (those 50 years of age and older) is growing and now account for 25% of the federal prison population. The study found that many older individuals were living out their single greatest expressed fear – dying in prison.

The 2018-19 *'Annual Report from the Office of the Correctional Investigator'* concluded there was little purpose or value in keeping palliative individuals who pose no undue risk to public safety behind bars.

The report noted the cost-savings of moving some of these individuals into a retirement home or a specialized community based residential facility would be substantial, and would be more responsive to dignity concerns.

In order to address this need, we created the Aging Offender program, specifically designed to ensure residents have suitable accommodation and specialized staff (nurses, healthcare assistants, case managers and outreach workers), to provide quality care. Prior to this program opening, aging offenders or those with complex medical histories would often remain incarcerated because of the lack of suitable housing, or they were placed into inappropriate settings.

"We are able to care for them and help them transition," explained Jerrica Hackett, who oversees the program at Phoenix. "We help them figure out their finances, their identification and look for transition options into long-term care facilities, returning to live with family, or any other housing options.

"We also have individuals who essentially stay with us until they pass. We try to run programs to make their time with us meaningful for them."

Phoenix offers clients 'Chair Fit' classes as well as Music Therapy, and we engage volunteers to run programs.

"We also try to encourage their independence if they're mobile, so we have staff escort them on outings and provide outreach if they're not allowed to be out in the community alone. It's really about helping them have a meaningful and purposeful life following incarceration."

In less than a year, Phoenix served a dozen individuals through the program.

**"We try to run programs to make their time with us meaningful for them."**

Phoenix's CEO Keir Macdonald notes that Community Residential Facilities were never intended to be nursing homes, or long-term care facilities.

"Yet increasingly they are being asked to fulfill those functions," said Macdonald. "We were very excited to launch this new program and are proud to meet this growing need in our corrections system."



Marnie Scow

# ALUMNI STORY

MEET PHOENIX ALUMN MARNIE, AND SEE WHERE SHE IS TODAY

When Marnie Scow arrived at Phoenix Society in 2017, she was the second woman to enter the new women's treatment program - and the first to complete it.

"I had never been to treatment before. I had been to a recovery society when I got out of prison in 2009, but I never experienced treatment," Marnie explained.

"I had just been released from prison and went to Recovery Baseball the next day. I ran into people I knew who worked at Phoenix and they said they just opened a women's treatment program there. I was very fortunate to have prior existing relationships with people in recovery," she recalled.

"They advocated for me as I was one of the first people who had ever applied for provincial funding. Phoenix provided wrap-around support for me, and it was comfortable because I knew so many people who were at Phoenix. I really liked that my situation was handled on an individual basis."

Like many residents at Phoenix Society, Marnie had a past. It began to catch up with her while she was in treatment.

"I had charges come up during my stay, while I was in the Phoenix program. I had been honest and forthright with staff about the court date and that this might be a possibility and I am grateful the Phoenix staff team supported me and made an exception for me to stay at the facility," she says.

While Marnie was at Phoenix, curfew checks and visits from police were regular.

"I don't know what I would have done or where I would have gone if Phoenix had asked me to leave due to the charges," she says.

"Before Phoenix, I lived a block away from the tent city on 135A Street. Phoenix gave me the connections and community that were positive for my life, and gave me long-lasting connections. Being in a community and creating a support group with people who were in a similar situation as me was really important."

Marnie says one of the most valuable things she received while at Phoenix was reconnection to her culture.

"Having access to culture was a life changing experience. It's something my soul craves," she smiles.

Phoenix has Indigenous Elders and a Cultural and Engagement Lead available to residents during the week. While Marnie had previously achieved seven years of sobriety, she relapsed.

According to Marnie, accessing her culture at Phoenix was what helped her through in finding long-term success.

"I rely on cultural and land-based healing and outside help. Phoenix gave me that safe place and a foundation to fall apart and to utilize the skills I previously had to create a solid foundation and build a life I am happy with. That was the goal; I got to stop and think about what I really wanted to do."

Today Marnie is flourishing. She has learned to speak her language again, started drumming and is a part of her Indigenous community.

"I am part of an amazing organization 'Culture Saves Lives.' We incorporate culture as a form of harm reduction and a form of healing, giving low barrier people access to culture in the Downtown East Side. I just believe people should have access to culture regardless of their relationship with substances. I have been able to take that approach to the work that I do."

Marnie is beginning her Masters in Public Health with a goal to be a Social Epidemiologist. She has co-authored an article "*People First Language*" which has been submitted to the International Journal of Drug Policy and she works as a remote Indigenous Overdose Response Grants Coordinator, overseeing \$1.2 million in grant funding in B.C.

Marnie says she does best in life when she's connected to culture.

"Having access to that early on in my recovery at Phoenix Society has been something I have kept at the forefront of my healing."



# MILESTONES

## APRIL 2020

Our COVID Isolation Centre opened in Abbotsford at the end of April supporting individuals who were COVID-19 positive or presumptive and awaiting test results.



## APRIL 2020

Our AfterCare app launched in April, providing a way for Phoenix Society Alumni to remain connected to Phoenix and access on-going support.



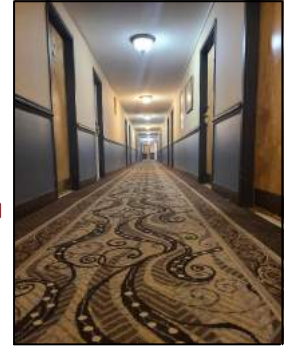
## MAY 2020

The new Aging Offender program launched in May and is now providing 24/7 clinical supports for elderly corrections clients with high health needs.



## JUNE 2020

Our new Emergency Response Centre opened in Coquitlam on June 22, providing shelter for those who are experiencing homelessness in the Tri-Cities.



## JULY 2020

Our Men's Stabilization Program, Phoenix House, officially opened in Surrey in partnership with Fraser Health.



## OCTOBER 2020

Phoenix Society led a Surrey Recovery Facility Homeless Count, the first of its kind. Of those surveyed, 68% had been homeless before – 33% in the previous year alone.



## DECEMBER 2020

A story on our men's knitting club was a viral sensation and was featured in multiple newspaper outlets, TV and radio shows and even CNN. In the process over \$7,500 was raised in donations to turn the 'Loom of Life' club into an on-going program at Phoenix.



## DECEMBER 2020

Phoenix obtained three-year CARF accreditation, signalling our commitment to continually improving services, encouraging feedback, and serving the community.



## JANUARY 2021

Our Mobile Community Kitchen launched out of our Phoenix Flame BBQ Food truck, serving free meals to those in need amid the pandemic in Surrey and Tri-Cities.



## FEBRUARY 2021

Phoenix opened a new Extreme Weather Shelter in Coquitlam in just 48 hours. This vital service helped 10 people a night on average while it was operating.



# HOUSING, HOPE AND RECOVERY SINCE 1989

“ It's been a challenging year for everyone, but I think we've been able to keep the program going at a high level and our clients are well supported and know we are there for them. Despite COVID 19 changing the landscape, we've been able to continue the work we've been known for, for many years now. ”

**Danny B**  
Abbotsford HIV Support Outreach Worker

“ It was really nice working and gaining experience at the Emergency Coquitlam Shelter. I am really thankful that you gave me the opportunity to work here. ”

**Anonymous**  
Emergency Response Centre Staff

“ Phoenix gave me the opportunity to grow and transition into independent living with a new quality of life. ”

**Tim P**  
Transitional Housing Resident

“ My previous experiences in halfway houses have been less than welcoming. This facility makes me feel comfortable, like staff aren't out to get me. I feel treated as an equal and I appreciate it. ”

**Mike**  
Corrections - Community Residential Facility Resident

“ I like to think of us as a tribe, the goal of a peaceful existence is our fire in the middle of the room. ”

**Ryan**  
Phoenix Employee

“ I've learned I am more than my addiction, more than the choices I've made and worthy of a life of recovery. I can nurture and be nurtured, and it's okay to show up in the world as myself because i am a good person deserving of a good life. Thank you Phoenix for changing the trajectory of my life. ”

**Anonymous**  
Treatment Resident

## OUR FUNDERS



## DONATE

Make a difference. Donate today!  
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