



Alpha Court

alphabits newsletter



Community Mental Health & Addiction Services

FALL 2024

Message From the Executive Director



As I started to think about what I would write for this edition of our Newsletter, my mind (as usual) went in a number of different directions. I started to think about our journey into Fall and how much I actually enjoy this season. I enjoy the crispness of the air, the smells of the forest and the quietness that surrounds me when I walk my dogs. I was reminded of an incident last Fall while I was on one of my hikes. It was getting dark and I happen to come across a roughed grouse (aka the “distant drummer”) on the trail. It spooked and flew up, hitting the brim of my hat. I don’t know who was more scared.

Remembering this incident brings to mind how much I enjoy hearing the drumming sound of the roughed grouse as it rapidly flaps its wings against its chest. This is because

I immensely enjoy the beats and sounds of the drum.

Over the last couple of years, I have had the opportunity to do some African drumming and I was astonished at how playing the djembe drum made me happy, feel relaxed and enabled me to work out stress. I researched further into the health benefits of drumming and sure enough playing the drum is correlated to many health benefits, including mindfulness, relaxation, improved heart rate and lowered anxiety, to name a few. ¹

You may be asking yourself, what is the relevance of this story? In all its wonder, Fall also brings shorter daylight and less sunlight overall which can have an affect our mood, motivation and sense of self. These symptoms can be quite extreme for some people, especially for those who experience Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD). The pending autumn season can cause a sense of dread.

Now is a good time to start thinking about what we can do to try to lessen the impact of the changes Fall and Winter can bring. We know that it is not as simplistic as just engaging activities we enjoy and may require professional intervention; however, every little bit we can do for ourselves may help. Regularly allotting time for

Continued on Page 2

¹ [8 Surprising Benefits of Drumming for Mental Health - Harmony Music Therapy](#)

Continued from Page 1

mood-boosting activities can help us feel physically and psychologically healthier.²

If you are impacted by the decrease in daylight, like me, I invite you to start thinking about what you can do to try to make Fall and Winter more enjoyable. This may include looking at engaging in some of the programs offered in our community, taking up a winter sport or walking through the picturesque forest. For me, I am going to march to the beat of my own drum! 💎



2 [Easing Seasonal Depression: 14 tips \(everydayhealth.com\)](https://www.everydayhealth.com)

Preparing for Winter Blues and Seasonal Affective Disorder (S.A.D.)

Some people feel excited for the winter months however, others may feel their moods drop as the temperature outside does. Winter Blues are common in Northern Ontario and may make you feel down or sad. According to the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) unlike Winter blues that often resolve on their own within two weeks, SAD is a type of depression that persists beyond two weeks. (CMHA, 2020). A professional can help you determine if you are experiencing Winter Blues or S.A.D.



If you or someone else experiences Winter Blues, you may find some of these low to no cost ideas helpful in preparing you for Winter this year;

Mood

Daylight can help boost your mood, even if it is cloudy, try opening your windows or going outside (CMHA, 2020). Preparing a routine to follow can help with structuring your day when experiencing low moods. Find your flow and activate both sides of your brain by trying something new or creative.

Physical

Start your day by stretching, this can help our bodies wake up and reduce tension or stress that has built up during our sleep. If going outside or working out is not an option for you, make it a habit to 'walk' around your living / working space as any form of exercise can boost your mood and improve energy. If stretching and walking are not working for you, try engaging 'Mental Fitness' with the 5 senses exercise. This exercise can help slow down and interrupt negative thoughts, as well as decrease blood pressure, and increase feeling calm.

Sleep

Our bodies operate on a 24-hour internal clock known as the Circadian Rhythm (National Center for Biotechnology Information, 2023). Having a regular sleep routine is an essential for mental wellness as it can improve our daily energy, focus, and reactions to our environment. Be mindful that oversleeping can cause you to feel drowsy, and/or have a significant impact on your daily functioning.



Self-Love

Remind yourself that similar to a plant, we need nutrients, water, and food to grow. Find what nourishes you. Self-soothe with a warm bath/shower, your favourite book/music or even your favourite photos/smells. Create a self-care kit that is readily accessible, and pack your kit with items that help you feel better, engage in laughter, or ground yourself- it is all about what feels right for you (Lifeline, n.d.). Remember that fresh soil means new nutrients, embrace trying something new.

Stigma

Mental Health can often be stigmatized or overlooked; this is especially so in relation to men. It is important to be mindful of these stigmas and the impact they may have on your well-being. People who undergo mental illness may be prone to judging themselves and their experience of it. Use compassion as your compass and start within yourself. 💡 *Adrianna Harvey, HBSW, RSW*

References

Canadian Mental Health Association. CMHA, (2020, January, 13). Winter blues 101. Retrieved August 15, 2024, from <https://cmha.ca/news/winter-blues-101/>

Centre for Addiction and Mental Health. CAMH (n.d.). Seasonal affective disorder. Retrieved August 15, 2024, from <https://www.camh.ca/en/health-info/mental-illness-and-addiction-index/seasonal-affective-disorder>

Lifeline. (n.d.). Creating a self-care box. Retrieved August 21, 2024, from <https://toolkit.lifeline.org.au/articles/techniques/creating-a-self-care-box>

National Center for Biotechnology Information. (2023, May, 1). Regulation of sleep. In *Neuroscience of sleep* (pp. 1-22). Retrieved August 21, 2024, from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK519507/#:~:text=The%20regulation%20of%20sleep%20is,light%20changes%20in%20our%20environment>

Purely Inspired. (2023, March, 30). Benefits of trying something new. Retrieved August 21, 2024, from <https://www.purelyinspired.com/blogs/articles/benefits-of-trying-something-new>



Unravelling the Haunting Truth: Exploring the Link Between Mental Health and Halloween

As the bracing air and swirling leaves signal the approach of Halloween, the eerie delight of decorations adorning homes and storefronts invites us to reflect on deeper themes, including those related to mental health.

The Psychological Impact of Halloween

Halloween is more than just dressing up and collecting candy; it taps into our primal emotions and psychological responses. For many, the holiday provides an opportunity to confront fears in a controlled environment (the fear of clowns, monsters and things that go bump in the night). This exposure can be therapeutic, allowing individuals to face anxieties in a safe, somewhat controlled, setting, ultimately aiding in desensitization. Moreover, the communal aspect of Halloween fosters social interactions, which are vital for mental health.

However, it's important to acknowledge that Halloween can also be challenging for some. Those with anxiety disorders or sensory sensitivities may find the sudden changes in routine, costumes, and decorations overwhelming. Likewise, the commercialization of fear during Halloween can trivialize real phobias and traumas, potentially triggering distress in vulnerable populations as they are surrounded by ghosts, goblins and killer clowns from outer space.

Ghosts of the Past: Historical Context

Delving into the history of Halloween reveals intriguing insights into its ties with mental health. Originating from ancient Celtic traditions, particularly the festival of Samhain, Halloween marked the end of the harvest season and the beginning of winter. This transition symbolized a time when the boundary between the living and the dead blurred, giving rise to rituals aimed at warding off malevolent spirits.

In a modern context, the concept of confronting ghosts and spirits can metaphorically represent addressing unresolved psychological issues. Stepping outside of our comfort zones to socialize while protected by the layer of anonymity provided by a costume as well as festivities drawing attention, away from each of us individually towards a common celebration. Halloween, therefore, offers a framework for exploring and processing our fears and anxieties in a setting that provides safeguards for each individual looking to expand their horizons.

The Role of Creativity in Healing

One of the most captivating aspects of Halloween is its celebration of creativity. From elaborate costumes to intricately carved pumpkins, the holiday encourages self-expression and imagination. Engaging in creative activities has been shown to have profound benefits for mental health, serving as a form of therapy and a means of communication for those who struggle with verbal expression.

Moreover, the process of planning and preparing for Halloween festivities can instill a sense of purpose and accomplishment, fostering positive emotions and self-esteem by giving us an avenue to explore our own artistic ideas. For individuals experiencing depression or loneliness, participating in community events or volunteering during Halloween can provide a sense of belonging and connection under a common goal of Halloween fun and excitement.

Addressing Stigma and Encouraging Dialogue

Despite the therapeutic potential of Halloween, mental health remains a topic often overshadowed by the revelry of the season. Stigma and misconceptions surrounding mental illness persist, preventing many individuals from seeking the help they need. By integrating discussions about mental health into Halloween celebrations, we can promote awareness and understanding.

Local communities, schools, and organizations can play a pivotal role in destigmatizing mental health by organizing inclusive events and providing resources for support. Encouraging open dialogue about fears and anxieties can empower individuals to confront and manage their mental health challenges throughout the year.

Conclusion: Embracing the Shadows

As we prepare to celebrate Halloween, let us remember its profound connection to mental health. Beyond the masks and monsters lies an opportunity for introspection, healing, and community. By embracing the shadows within ourselves and others, we can foster a culture of empathy and resilience, where every individual feels empowered to seek help and support.

This Halloween, as you don costumes and carve jack-o'-lanterns, take a moment to reflect on the deeper themes at play and experience the valuable lessons that Halloween can provide! 💡 *Robert Rae, RSW – Case Manager*



Social Stigma and Social Norms – Men’s Mental Health

One of the primary barriers to men’s mental health is the pervasive stigma surrounding emotional expression. Traditional norms often encourage men to appear fearless and self-reliant which can discourage them from seeking help or expressing their feelings. According to the American Psychological Association (APA), these societal expectations can lead men to not acknowledge struggles and seek professional support. (APA 2023)

American Psychological Association APA 2023, Men and Mental Health. Retrieved from <https://www.apa.org>



Men’s mental health is often overlooked, both by men themselves and those around them. To address this issue, it is crucial to adopt a holistic approach that encompasses physical, mental, emotional, and, for some, spiritual aspects of well-being. Key strategies for improving men’s overall health include regular checkups to detect issues early, maintaining a healthy diet, engaging in regular exercise, and establishing a consistent sleep routine while reducing harmful substances. Building and nurturing social connections are also vital for emotional support and reducing feelings of isolation.

In addition to these foundational practices, men can benefit from increased awareness and education about mental health conditions such as depression and anxiety, which can lead to more effective management and treatment. Stress management techniques, such as mindfulness and meditation, are important for navigating daily pressures. Engaging in activities and sports that align with personal interests can enhance mood and provide a sense of purpose. Support groups offer a valuable space for sharing experiences and challenges, thereby fostering resilience and mutual support. Furthermore, creative expression through activities like writing or drawing can be therapeutic, providing an outlet for self-expression. By integrating these strategies into their lives, men can achieve a more balanced approach to their health and well-being, leading to a more resilient and fulfilling life. 💡 *Nick Pittarelli, HBSW - Community Mental Health & Addictions*

Sweet Grass Adventure

Part 1: Picking Sweet Grass

Alpha Court Day Centre together with the Indigenous Adventures Group had the delight to a first-time-ever two-part experience! We were extended the invitation for the opportunity to pick Sweet Grass at a nearby location. Many thanks to the individual who grows the medicine and gave us this honour of picking Sweet Grass!

The adventure began with a teaching about smudging so that individuals could partake in the tradition with an understanding of the cleansing medicine's purpose. Teachings were introduced with reference to Sweet Grass, named "Wiingaashk" in Ojibway language, as one of the four sacred plants, (including cedar, sage and tobacco).

Indigenous people believe Sweet Grass is the hair of Mother Earth and a gift from the Creator. It represents the Mother, our Mother, Mother Earth. It is our connection to the land, to what is around us. The sweet aroma of Sweet Grass reminds us of the gentleness, love and kindness She has for the people and to recall our ancestors.

Sweetgrass represents three elements: mind, body, and spirit healing in unity. It is used to represent resilience, strength, and healing through truthful talk and is the connection to the Creator and all our relations. When burned, the medicine purifies and eliminates negative energy, and promotes happiness, open heartedness, and harmony.

The Sweet Grass teachings was followed by yet another teaching—a teaching about tobacco offering. Everyone laid tobacco to give thanks to Mother Earth for providing us with the healing medicine of Sweet Grass. As the culture teaches us: "if you are taking from the earth, you must then honour the earth".

Participants were guided about "picking" the Sweet Grass—the medicine is actually cut with scissors about an inch up from the ground, thus, protecting its' roots and allowing the medicine to continue to flourish.

Part 2: Sweet Grass Braiding

The second phase of this adventure occurred a week later at the day centre. Once again, the traditional smudge and medicine teachings were provided to the participants (a full house!) as they sipped Sweet Grass tea. The teachings and instruction for making the traditional 21 strand Sweet Grass braid followed:

Each of the three sections of the braid contains seven strands. ($3 \times 7 = 21$). The first section represents the Seven Generations behind us; the second represents the Seven Grandfather Teachings; the third section represents the Seven Generations to come. In addition, the braid represents three postures which is gentleness, love, and kindness for the people.

The lesson of the braid reminds us of Gidinawendimin which means we are all connected - to everyone and everything, in the past, the present and the coming of the future.

Continued on Page 8



Continued from Page 7

The Grandfather teachings are our tools for healing as we Walk the Good Life. We are reminded to live in the present and to be at harmony with the spirit of Gidinawendimin—healing occurs and change happens in this Present!

Indigenous Adventures programming occurs the first Friday of each month at the day centre. For more information, please call *Natalie* at (807) 632-9230. Miigwetch. 🍷

Sources:

University of Manitoba:

The Centre for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning

Windspeaker.com: Sweetgrass: The Hair of Mother Earth

Indigenous Corporate Training Inc.: Indigenous Sacred Plants: Sweetgrass

Indigenous Fellowship of Hamilton Road: Sweet Grass Teaching



DEFINING SUCCESS: The Journey of Happiness

The definition of success presents as challenging! As individuals, we each define success in our own unique and personal way. Try doing a Google Search on defining success—the results are endless. Some definitions refer to “desired outcomes at any point in a person’s experience over time”; “achieving a small goal or victory for the day”; and still others’ view it as “positively impacting society, earning a college degree, or amassing wealth”.

“I’m pretty sure success is not just about climbing to the top of a greasy pole.” - Laurie Friday

The Oxford Dictionary defines success as a noun: "The accomplishment of an aim or purpose. The attainment of fame, wealth or social status ". However, many people believe success is not limited to the obvious great achievements, socioeconomic status, prestige, and popularity that comes with popular celebrities and athletes. The opposite holds true!

“Try not to become a man of success, rather become a man of value.” - Albert Einstein

Many individuals believe success includes valuing all fellow humans and humanity; that we are all connected as one unit, one people. Success can be measured by endeavouring to do and give our best in any given situation. Defining “our best” is solely individualized and unique; it embodies our perception and insight of our past experiences and our present moment. “Our best” comprises of a non-judgemental and embracing attitude with a gentleness towards self and others.

“Success is measured in many ways – the most important of which is how you feel about yourself.” - Linda King

Alpha Court “values *Dignity* – we believe in the strengths, uniqueness, value and worth of all people; and *Hope* – we believe that hope is the cornerstone to change and recovery”. Our agency utilizes the Psychosocial Rehabilitation approach that promotes individualized and personal growth in all life areas, including integration and active community participation. We are favoured daily as we observe success with people we support.

So...what is success? Success is... when a person reaches out for a lifeline; attends an appointment or walk-in; takes their medication; gets out of bed in the morning/goes to bed at night; does self-care (bathing and personal hygiene, dental, medical, optometrist care); and completes tasks and chores (making their bed, going grocery shopping, learning to budget, count money, cook, bake, clean, do laundry).

Success is...when a person decreases mental health symptoms where they can walk outside their front door and not fear the impossible; when one experiences a sense of belonging and engages in meaningful social connections; and that feeling of joy for no apparent reason; the list goes on ad infinitum.

Our Case Managers identify success as:

- Taking risks to try new activities beyond one's perceived limitations.
- I define success as being happy and fulfilled in your life, feeling content.
- Discovering one's talents
- Living out dreams
- I define success as achieving the goals you set for yourself and therefore, living the life you want.
- I define success as having courage to search within to connect with truth of spirit.
- Success is an improvement in the quality of life.
- I define success as the bravery to try.
- Success is the fulfillment of one's potential and purpose in life, marked by a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction.
- I define success as when someone can reflect on their past and recognize growth in any area.
- Success is greeting your day with purpose and putting your best effort forward.

At Alpha Court, we have the privilege to candidly witness success in the lives of people we support; we have the honour to walk beside them and be their cheerleaders. At times, we provide the life preservers to those drowning in darkness and despair to assist them to embark on their journey to a meaningful life with the aspiration of hope, renewal of purpose, and achievement of personal goals and dreams. We Support Successful People! 💎 *Natalie Stobert, Case Manager; Addictions & Mental Health*

“What is success?

To laugh often and much.

To win the respect of intelligent people and the affection of children.

To earn the appreciation of honest critics and endure the betrayal of false friends.

To appreciate beauty.

To find the best in others.

*To leave the world a bit better, whether by a healthy child,
a garden patch, or a redeemed social condition.*

To know even one life has breathed easier because you have lived.

This is to have succeeded.”

- Ralph Waldo Emerson


Pride Parade 2024

This year Alpha Court did indeed “Rise Up” to the 2024 Pride Parade and Festival. The theme, “2024 Rise Up Pride’ aims to combat hate, protect human rights, and foster a diverse, respectful environment”. We at Alpha Court aspire to embrace inclusivity and we support the rights and extend respect and dignity to the 2SLGBTQIA+ community.

The banner pictured below was the first to appear this year in the parade! Prior to the event, members of the Walking Proud Group, in conjunction with the day centre and several staff members, contributed their artwork to the banner. This activity assisted individuals to feel a sense of empowerment and pride, and to convey their personal expression towards community inclusiveness.

Currently, our Pride banner is displayed at the day centre and we look forward to walking in future parades with our agency’s banner.

Below is the link to TBNewsWatch coverage of the event which captured Alpha Courts Banner in the parade!
<https://youtu.be/F2ddFsf4xIs?si=6eaxwOSDdHhIcqtW>

The Walking Proud Group (2SLGBTQIA+ and Allies) meet the second Thursday of each month at the day centre. For more information, please contact *Natalie at (807) 632-9230*. 

Source: Thunder Pride



(L-R: Natalie, Amanda, Adrianna, Barb, and Ted)

A Client's Story

Fabian needed to replace a lost birth certificate. His case manager Aliyah supported him to a birth certificate clinic at the Norwest Community Health Centre. However, Fabian did not have enough information about his mother to complete the application. The Lakehead Legal Clinic volunteer who was assisting at Norwest tried hard to find the information through searching obituaries online, contacting Fabian's band office, google searches, etc, but was unsuccessful in finding the information needed to complete application.

With Fabian's permission, his case manager contacted the Reference Department of the Thunder Bay Public Library. Brodie staff reached out to a local researcher who was able to find the necessary information.

Norwest submitted Fabian's completed birth certificate application and 6 weeks later Fabian finally got his birth certificate.

Fabian would like to thank Alpha Court, Norwest, Lakehead Legal Clinic and Thunder Bay Public library staff and researcher for helping him finally get his birth certificate! 💎



Post Card Group with Sara Hampel



In May, the day center joined [Postcrossing.com](https://www.postcrossing.com), creating a group profile to exchange postcards with people around the world. We've already sent postcards to countries like Finland, Germany, and China, and have received beautiful postcards from Taiwan, Brazil, India, Belarus, and Lithuania.

Participating in this has been an exciting journey, offering us the chance to learn about different cultures and places across the globe.

If you'd like to join us, check the Day Centre calendar for our Postcard Group meeting times! 💎



Alpha Court Day Centre

This upcoming November 2024 the Day Centre is turning 13!

We would like to take a moment to acknowledge those who have attended the centre, past and present facilitators as well as all our partnering agencies. Without your attendance and hard work throughout the past 13 years; we wouldn't have been able to do it without you! 🎉

Day Centre Quick Facts



1 Bus route #9 Junot and #11 Windsor will bring you right to the Day Centre.



2 You can easily find our Day Centre Calendar and referral on our website www.alphacourt.ca or by calling the Day Centre at 807-683-7729.



3 The Day Centre Facilitators are very active on our Facebook page- check there for program and agency updates.



4 You do not need to have a professional refer you to the Day Centre services- self referral is A-OK!



5 The Day Centre offers an array of programs including Indigenous Culture, 2SLGBTQI+, Health and Fitness and so much more.



6 We are an accessible building- since our room is located on the second floor; we have access to an elevator.



7 Between April 1st and September 1st, the Day Centre Lunch program has fed over 279 people!

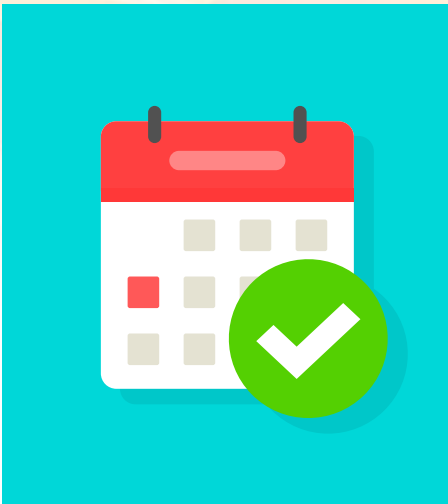
2024 Canadian Lakehead Exhibition

The Canadian Lakehead Exhibition had its 11th Special Needs Day on Thursday August 8th, 2024. For the last several years, Alpha Court clients have generously been given the opportunity to attend the fair for free due to donation of tickets to our agency. Clients are given the opportunity to attend on their own, with their case managers or as a group with the Alpha Court Day Centre.

Numerous individuals receiving support services from the agency attended the afternoon event. Hats off to the amazing staff who contributed in every way: the “behind the scenes” for liaison with the CLE and ticket count; distributing tickets; attending with individuals, and providing a special touch of encouragement to those who needed additional support! Well done staff!

Alpha Court Staff and Clients would like to extend a HUGE thank you. 💎





IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER

- *October is Mental Health Awareness Month*
- *October 6th-12th is Mental Illness Awareness Week*
- *October 19th is International Pronouns Day*
- *November 20th-26th is National Addiction Awareness Week*
- *November 20th is Transgender day of Remembrance*
- *December 3rd International Day of Persons with Disabilities*
- *December 6th National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Woman in Canada*
- *December 10th Human Rights Day*
- *February is Black History Month as well as National Therapeutic Recreation Month*

Quote of the Season

Every season our Youth Case Manager, Adrianna Harvey, uses her creative talents to put an inspirational quote on our whiteboard at the Wilson office site.

For Fall, Adrianna has drawn a picture of the cornucopia, also called the horn of plenty, overflowing with fruit. These baskets were traditionally used in Asia and Europe to hold and tote newly harvested goods. In North America, it has become a symbol of Thanksgiving.¹

Fall is a time of gratitude and harvest and reminds us that rewards can come from our dedication. It is a time that we can focus on the successes that uplift us and adds to this journey we are on. As Adrianna pointed out, “embrace the harvest of your hard work”² 💡



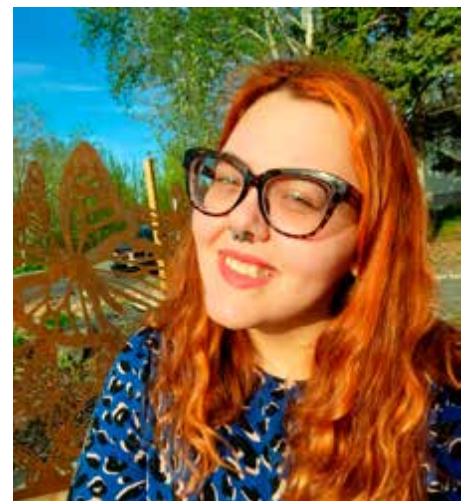
¹ [Cornucopia - Wikipedia](#)

² [Autumn's Wisdom: 7 Lessons from the Fall Season – Sea of Solace](#)

Welcome to Alpha Court Tatem

We would like to welcome Tatem Landry to our team as our new Dual Diagnosis Case Manager. With a background in developmental services and housing-based case management, Tatem values Alpha Court's commitment to strength-based and psychosocial rehabilitation models and is eager to contribute within these frameworks.

Tatem's focus is to promote health equity by providing flexible and accommodating support to bridge gaps between services, ensuring each person receives the support and information they need to maintain their wellness. We're grateful to have Tatem with us and we look forward to working with you. 💡



Black History Month

February will mark Black History Month (S.O 2016). It is a time to acknowledge the economic, social, political and cultural contributions Black Canadians have made.

Alpha court would like to acknowledge Viola Davis Desmond (1914-1965), a Black woman born in Halifax Nova Scotia. One night in 1946, Ms. Desmond decided to go to see a movie in a theatre. She refused to sit in the balcony, which was designated exclusively for Blacks, instead choosing to sit on the main floor. She was removed, with force, and arrested as the main floor was considered for whites only.

Viola was found guilty of not paying a one-cent difference in tax on the balcony ticket and was sentenced to 30 days in jail and paid a \$26 fine. The trial did not touch upon the discriminatory practices of the theatre, but rather on the perceived “tax evasion” allegedly committed by Ms. Desmond. Following the trial, the Nova Scotia Association for the Advancement of Coloured People took the case to the Supreme Court of Nova Scotia. The conviction was sustained.

In April 2010, the Province of Nova Scotia granted Ms. Desmond a formal apology and a pardon. In 2016, Viola Davis Desmond was placed on the Canadian ten-dollar bill.


The incident with Ms. Desmond took place 78 years ago and we do not see Blacks only seating, fountains, entrances and so forth; unfortunately, racial discrimination continues to exist in our Country. According to a 2019 Survey by Statistics Canada:

- Of all Black people, four in ten (41%) experienced discrimination based on their race or skin colour, about 15 times higher than non-visible minority populations (3%).
- A Considerably higher proportion of Black people experienced discrimination in 2019 than in 2014 (46% versus 28%).

We need to engage in further dialogue about racism. Alpha Court is committed to bringing awareness to and challenging systemic racism by:

Educating: We are committed to educating ourselves on systemic racism and the impact on the people we serve.

Reflecting: We are committed to reflecting on how systemic racism may impact our own values and perspectives. We are willing to enter into uncomfortable spaces and conversations to challenge ourselves.

Speaking up: We are committed to speaking up when we see or hear an act of systemic and individual racism. 

Sources:

[Noteworthy figures - Canada.ca](#)

[Experiences of discrimination among the Black and Indigenous populations in Canada, 2019 \(statcan.gc.ca\)](#)

[Systemic racism: What it looks like in Canada and how to fight it? | VPFO | UBC](#)



Submitted by: Nicole Latour

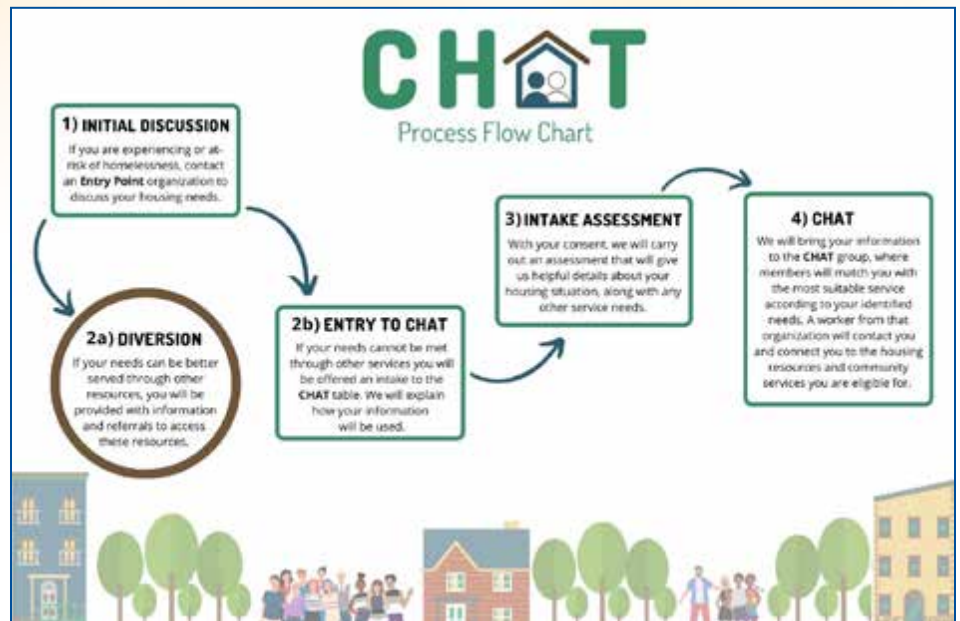
Coordinated Housing Access Table (CHAT): Collective Advocacy

Thunder Bay has a Coordinated Housing Access Table (CHAT) which consists of a group of service providers who offer housing and/or support services and resources to individuals or families who are experiencing homelessness.

People who are experiencing homelessness and are not currently receiving support to find housing can visit one of a number of entry points to meet and discuss their housing needs and complete an assessment which helps the CHAT service providers make decisions around services and prioritization.

The benefit of organizations coming together to work collectively and collaboratively reduces gaps and duplications in service provision and aims to make services responsive to the needs of our community. Our goal for the future is for an increase in culturally safe, supportive housing spaces.

If you work within the housing and homelessness sector, consider joining CHAT! Find out more at: <https://www.tbaychat.com> or contact Moneka, CHAT Facilitator, at mjoyce@alphacourt.ca PH: 807-620-0825



A Message From our Rapid Response System Navigation Workers

For the past two years Alpha Court's Rapid Response workers, Joleen and Jennifer, have been going to Thunder Bay's tent encampments weekly.

Engaging with homeless individuals in encampments is challenging but essential work. Joleen and Jennifer have been providing basic needs such as water, hygiene supplies, socks and blankets. This outreach work requires more than just providing services, it demands a commitment to understanding, respecting and empowering a vulnerable population.

By building trust, offering empathetic support, outreach can lay the groundwork for connecting individuals to long term services.

Joleen and Jennifer have been successfully collaborating with Outreach Workers with Thunder Bay District Social Services Administration Board and developing a compassionate, non-judgemental approach to engaging with the people residing in the encampments. The goal of our outreach services is to help individuals move towards stability and self-sufficiency while respecting their rights and dignity.

Joleen and Jennifer would like to thank the following for their donations to help make this engagement more successful. With this support we were able to purchase the water and supplies needed by the people we support.

Alpha Court | Cheryl Hill

UNIFOR Women's Committee | UNIFOR Ontario Regional Committee