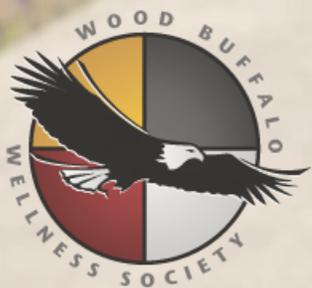


WOOD BUFFALO WELLNESS SOCIETY

2019-2020 ANNUAL REPORT





MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



JO-ANNE PACKHAM

The 2019-2020 year was a year of change, growth and transition for our agency. One with a few challenges but mostly marked with great success and promise of great possibility for our future! Over shadowing all else, this year will very likely be known as the year of Covid-19, but our staff team rallied and adapted, pivoting our programming and creating space for future opportunity for us.

We closed out the last few weeks of the year in the wake of Covid-19 with all staff working from home, juggling caseloads and ensuring that our clients, and our community had the resources they needed to be safe. In the very early days of the pandemic response, we championed an awareness campaign on social media educating everyone on available mental

health and additions supports throughout the province. We reached out to and supported nearly 400 current and past clients to check in and provided countless care packages, with PPE, sanitation supplies and recreational kits all within the last few weeks of March, and moving into April. Our staff's response during this challenging time was commendable.

Throughout the year we have continued to work on our strategic priorities set forth in 2018. Some have faded in the light of a new economy, and changes in leadership but more importantly, our direction and path forward as an agency committed to addressing impacts of colonization on Indigenous people has been solidified. We have identified our barriers and are actively setting forth to break them down and forge on to creating lasting change and impact within our community. Through partnerships with the Canadian Red Cross and the United Way of Fort McMurray and Wood Buffalo, and our continued support from Indigenous Services Canada we continue to provide one of the most sought-after residential addictions programs in the NNADAP system. Suncor continued to invest into our aftercare program which has afforded so many individuals the opportunity to transition back into society and into the workforce because we know that everyone needs to experience success and independence for long term recovery. Greater investment into Opioid response and aftercare needs from Indigenous Service Canada have afforded us the ability to expand our recovery and cultural programming into, and in partnership with the rural surrounding communities.

MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

In our Community Services programs we continue to grow our programs and programming to address the needs of our clientele. Our success rates in all programs have increased over that last year and we continue to be champions of program fidelity and key collaborators within a network of agencies investing in moving the needle on homelessness in our region. Our major program highlights include incredible success rates in our Community Service Outreach program, with 60 persons housed and an 85% success rate to date! Our overall MATC occupancy rate has jumped from 63% to 84% from the previous year. All a testament to the hard work put in by a committed team in both settings! We continued to champion reconciliation and Indigenous awareness activities for our local community and have established new partnerships with our local First Nations as well as community service agencies. We stand true to our belief that all persons working with Indigenous clients need to be given the opportunity to learn about Indigenous culture and the impacts of colonization. The best way we can contribute to a solution and facilitate this is by opening our doors and sharing our knowledge. In the spirit of our Omaniwew teachings, we take pride in this.

As we move forward into 2021 and beyond, we will continue to focus on issues that are of great importance to us including indigenizing our programming, diversifying our revenue streams, relationship building with our local Indigenous community and building local awareness of our Society and programs. This awareness will aid us in our strategic efforts for greater financial independence as we take on new challenges in social enterprise and expand our programming into the 2020 and 2021 years. The experience of serving our clients through a global pandemic has created a different perspective and challenged us on what is really possible and perhaps practical in working with our clients. We pivoted our programming in all programs from face to face interactions to virtual contact and heavily relied on phone connections. We have learned that technology can assist us in creating meaning connection with persons that we would not have normally had access to. We will continue to build on this and develop new programming for our virtual platform.

After a lengthy closure due to Covid-19 we look forward to re-opening the MATC in the fall of 2020, with renewed passion and commitment to our clients and a commitment to the highest level of client safety in these challenging times. Over the next year you will see us with a greater presence in the community for post residential addictions treatment aftercare supports as this has been indented locally as a serious concern in methamphetamine and opioid response as well as an increase in our online programming. We have opportunities and partnerships to explore with both our Indigenous communities and organizations that will allow us to sustain and expand our programming and consequently our reach in community. Hand in hand with this, our efforts with relationship building, networking and marketing and communications will continue to be a priority. Partnerships will also be very important as we look forward to strengthening our cultural program to benefit not only our clients but the community at large. We renew our commitment

MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

to cultivate our greatest asset, our staff, through professional and personal development opportunities and exercising leadership strategies of mentorship, supervision and fostering autonomy. We know that the best way to support the clientele is to ensure that we have a skilled, healthy and committed team and we demonstrate this belief in our daily practices.

In closing, I would like to offer thanks to some very important groups of people. We want to humbly acknowledge the Elders and knowledge keepers that enrich our program on a daily basis. Your guidance helps our clients and our staff immensely and we are eternally grateful for your gifts.

To our Board of Directors and Volunteers, your support to our work and to us as a team is incredibly valued, thank you! To our partner agencies, we could not do what we do without working alongside you. To our funders, government and personal, your faith in our programming, staff and client's potential and worth is humbly noted and greatly appreciated!

Finally, I want to acknowledge the most important group of persons in this whole report, the clientele that we serve. It takes unbelievable courage to present yourself and all your vulnerabilities and put in the work to reverse cycles of trauma, violence, abuse and self loathing. Each day you summon the courage to challenge yourself to push past these barriers and shine. The good life (miyo-pimatisiwin) is possible, change is possible. Keep going! We are proud of you.



Hiy Hiy/Meegwetch
Jo-Anne Packham

SOCIETY HIGHLIGHTS



342

CLIENTS SERVED



49

**SUCCESSFUL MARK
AMY GRADUATES**



83

**INDIVIDUALS
HOUSED**

WOOD BUFFALO WELLNESS SOCIETY

VISION

A community of safety, health and hope.

MISSION

We are a non-profit organization providing residential therapeutic treatment and Housing First Case Management solutions to individuals and families facing addiction and homelessness.

MANDATE

Recovery honouring the individual, respecting tradition and blessed with the heart and soul of harm reduction.

CORE VALUES

Derived from the seven traditional teachings.

- Love
- Respect
- Humility
- Honesty
- Courage
- Wisdom
- Truth

MARK AMY TREATMENT CENTRE

PROGRAM OVERVIEW



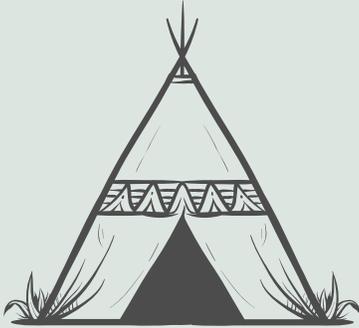
MATC is a 16 bed residential addiction treatment facility located 25 minutes south of Fort McMurray on Fort McMurray First Nation. The program was built and established in 1989, named after the late Mark Amy, a Nechi Institute Instructor who was instrumental in the planning and formation of the treatment Centre. In 2006, a new society, the Wood Buffalo Wellness Society was struck to oversee the program, which it has since. To date from 2006, we have served just over 3000 clients.

Our program is grounded in daily Indigenous teachings and ceremony focusing on healing the whole person from past traumas, breaking cycles derived from intergenerational impacts of colonization on Indigenous peoples of Canada. Although an Indigenous based service delivery model, it is open to all clients, regardless of ancestry that fall into our funding guidelines. Commonly referred to as bio-psycho-social-spiritual model, MATC utilizes a synthesis of several evidence-based approaches and strategies to achieve positive outcomes for those that utilize our services. These include, but are not limited to: trauma informed practices, CBT, MI, DBT, SFT, Traditional Teachings, Ceremonies, and Healing Practices.

The program is primarily funded by the First Nations and Inuit Health Branch of Health Canada with supplemental assistance from the United Way of Fort McMurray and Wood Buffalo. The United Way also funds 2 treatment beds which are available to local RMWB residents only. These beds are an important asset in the local social profit addiction and recovery network and demand for these beds far exceeds our ability to meet the need. Within the last year MATC transitioned from block intake to continuous intake to increase bed occupancy. Despite closure due to Covid-19 for the last half of March, our occupancy rates sat at an average of 78% for the year. Our wait list varies throughout the year but can be as short as a week in the summer months to 3-9 months in peak periods.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

ENHANCED CULTURAL PROGRAMMING



47

SWEAT LODGES

Although the 2016 Wild Fire continues to impact the community and the agency, it has afforded us some funding opportunities. We were able to secure a two year contract with the Canadian Red Cross in order to provide culturally appropriate healing opportunities to our residents as well as the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo. Through this contract, we have been able to work with a number of Elders and Knowledge Keepers from our region. We strive to provide bi-weekly sweat lodges, pipe ceremonies and teachings to our residents. In addition, they are a resource for the communities when they are in need of support. Unfortunately, this funding will end in 2020.



1198

DAILY CEREMONIES

Additionally, we were supported by funding from the United Way, Fire Recovery Program to September 2019. Both contracts not only allowed us to provide enhanced to support our residents, they also allowed us to provide ceremony and teachings to the Indigenous communities of the RMWB. Furthermore, through the Red Cross contract we have been providing Cultural Teaching days to other local service providers. It is our hope that these free training days build competency in the area for working with the Indigenous population, therefore reducing systemic harm to the populations that we serve. Throughout this year we hosted 6 teaching days with 86 participants including Social Workers, EMS and members of the oil and gas industry.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

We understand that we can not do the work that we do in isolation and that we have an obligation as individuals and as a community organization to positively contribute to the community for the benefit of all. In addition to hosting community Indigenous cultural teaching days for professionals, and hosting community sweat lodges, we encourage our staff team to be involved with other organizations, events and networks within our region often outside of their work roles and typical work hours. We feel that this also strengthens our service delivery within the community and is an investment into the skills and capacity of our staff team.

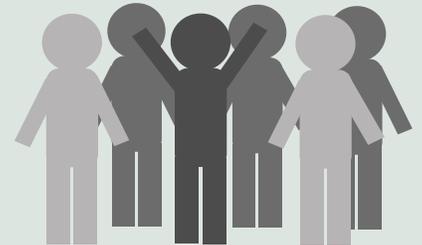
Our staff have been involved with a local rural opioid response planning committee, planning committees for the 2022 Arctic Winter games, the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo's Reconciliation Advisory Circle as well as highly involved in the region's Poverty Reduction Network as Co-Chair and managing the administration and social media accounts. We volunteer for other non-profit fundraisers as well as sit on other Boards of Directors. Our Executive Director offers mentorship and support through local Executive Director mentor/mentee programs. Over this year we provided space for the weekly meetings of a newly established non-profit society for neuro-diverse individuals in the community. We as a staff team harvest medicines each summer as a part of our team building activities and we openly share these medicines with all community members and professional partners that request them.

Additionally, we have been invited to present and facilitate activities at our local Anzac elementary school, making dream catchers, and feasting on bannock and jam prepared in our kitchen and our Elders and Knowledge Keepers were invited to numerous events for blessings, teachings or for one on one support and family meetings.



2

CULTURAL TRIPS



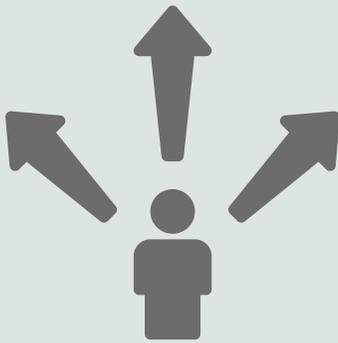
115

**COMMUNITY
PARTICIPANTS IN
SWEAT LODGES**



9

Traditional Rural Classes



101

Rural Aftercare Outreach

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

**RURAL OPIOID OUTREACH:
PREVENTION AND
AFTERCARE SUPPORT**

In an effort to respond to the Opioid and Methamphetamine crisis in our province, FNIHB provided us with funds to create a rural response program where we can work alongside our region's rural communities to build programming and support them in their efforts in community. This funding came to us late in the year and the program kicked off in February but will continue to March 2021. In February we partnered with Janvier Health Centre, the Fort McKay Family Support Centre and the Fort McMurray First Nation to provide interactive cultural teaching classes aimed at establishing supportive networks, inviting connection and communication with our Counsellors and instilling cultural pride and increased interest in cultural activities. We provided 9 classes in all on rattle making and traditional skirt making and all were well attended with just over 100 attendees. Additional workshops were booked with Nunee Health in Fort Chipewyan and regular workshops were scheduled to move through the coming year. We very proudly partnered with Fort McMurray First Nation to co-host a round dance as well but unfortunately due to Covid-19 the round dance as well as some of the later scheduled workshops were cancelled. All are expected to pick up again, once pandemic restrictions are lifted.







42

NUMBER OF
AFTERCARE AND
OUTREACH CLIENTS



4

YEARS OF SUNCOR
AFTERCARE FUNDING

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

POST TREATMENT GROUP

Established in 2016, this program offers aftercare support to clients returning to the community from any residential treatment program. We know that after returning home from treatment, clients often struggle to adjust to new routines, new expectations and new social groups, as well as social isolation all while maintaining their recovery.

Suncor has been a long-time supporter of this program for us. Throughout this year the program met bi-weekly with one of our certified addiction counsellors. The group engages in prosocial activities such as going out for dinner, sporting events, cultural activities and volunteer work in the community. Debrief groups and sharing circles about what life is like for them without the use of substances are also an integral part of the client experience and offer a bit of formalized structure that was successful for them from a treatment setting. The intention is to create a supportive, healthy network for clients and link all back into continued professional supports.

In addition to weekly activities, we have been able to utilize the funding in order to help some clients gain the necessary skills and certifications to re-enter the workforce, work boots, assistance with identifications and support in wellness activities. This program has been invaluable to the successful transition from our program back into the local community.



STAFFING

We currently have 4 full time CACCF/CCPC certified addiction counsellors. This keeps our caseloads small and allows us to be responsive to our client's individual needs. In addition to our clinical team, our Team consists of a Team Lead and Administrative Manager as well as support staff including a cultural coordinator, Intake/Admin, cooks and night attendants. Elders and Knowledge keepers are contracted to provide ceremony, cultural teachings, and support to clients and staff. In addition we have secured a contract with a psychologist to provide in house services to our clients flowing into the 2020-2021 year.

Staffing continues to be a challenge in the region and although we have diversified our funding beyond NNADAP funding, we continue to find it challenging to provide adequate pay to remain competitive with others in the region.

UTILIZATION

Business development professionals frequently have had earlier experience in sales, financial services, investment banking or management consulting; although some find their route to this area by climbing the corporate ladder in functions such as operations management.

In practice, the term business development and its actor, the business developer, have evolved into many usages and applications. Today, the applications of business development and the business developer's tasks across industries and countries, cover everything from IT-programmers, specialized engineers, advanced marketing or key account management activities, and sales and relations development for current and prospective customers. For this reason, it has been difficult to discern the unique features of the business development function and whether these activities are a source of profits.

84%

Overall
Occupancy

82%

Health Canada
Occupancy

100%

United Way
Occupancy

91% Overall Utilization

APPLICATION TO GRADUATION

287

TOTAL NUMBER OF APPLICATIONS



MALE



FEMALE

APPLIED FOR TREATMENT

152

135

ATTENDED TREATMENT

47

34

GRADUATED

30

19

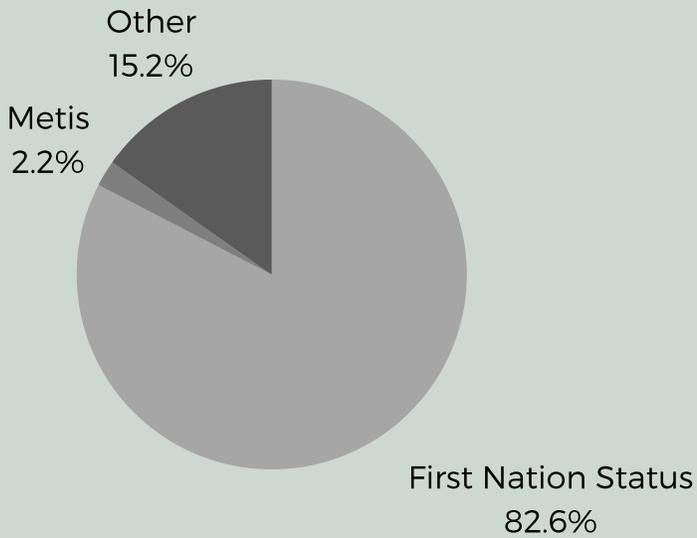
CANCELLED APPLICATION

67

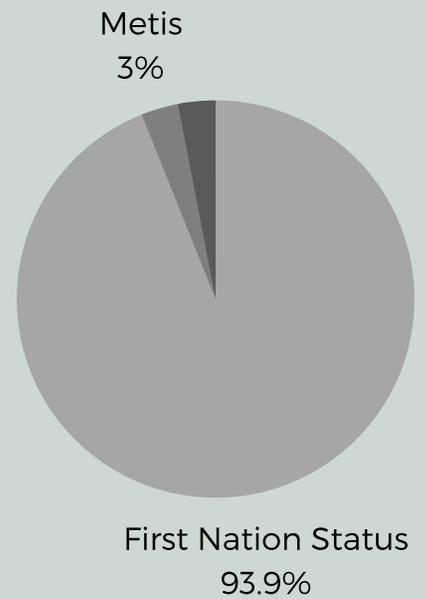
65

DEMOGRAPHICS

STATUS



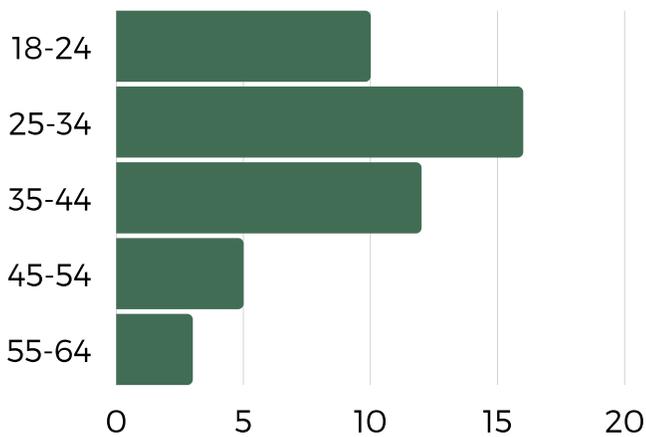
MALE



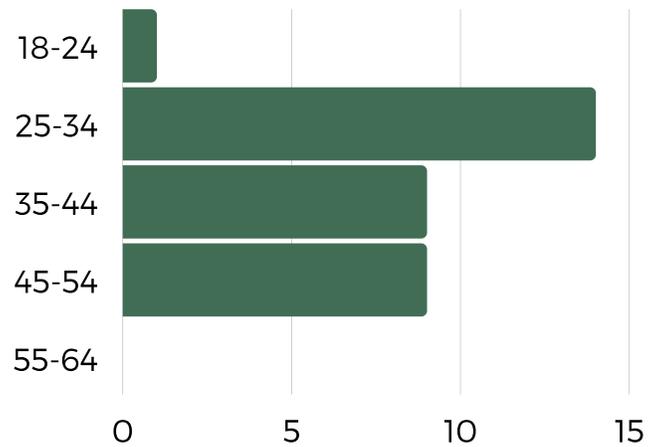
FEMALE

AGE DISTRIBUTION

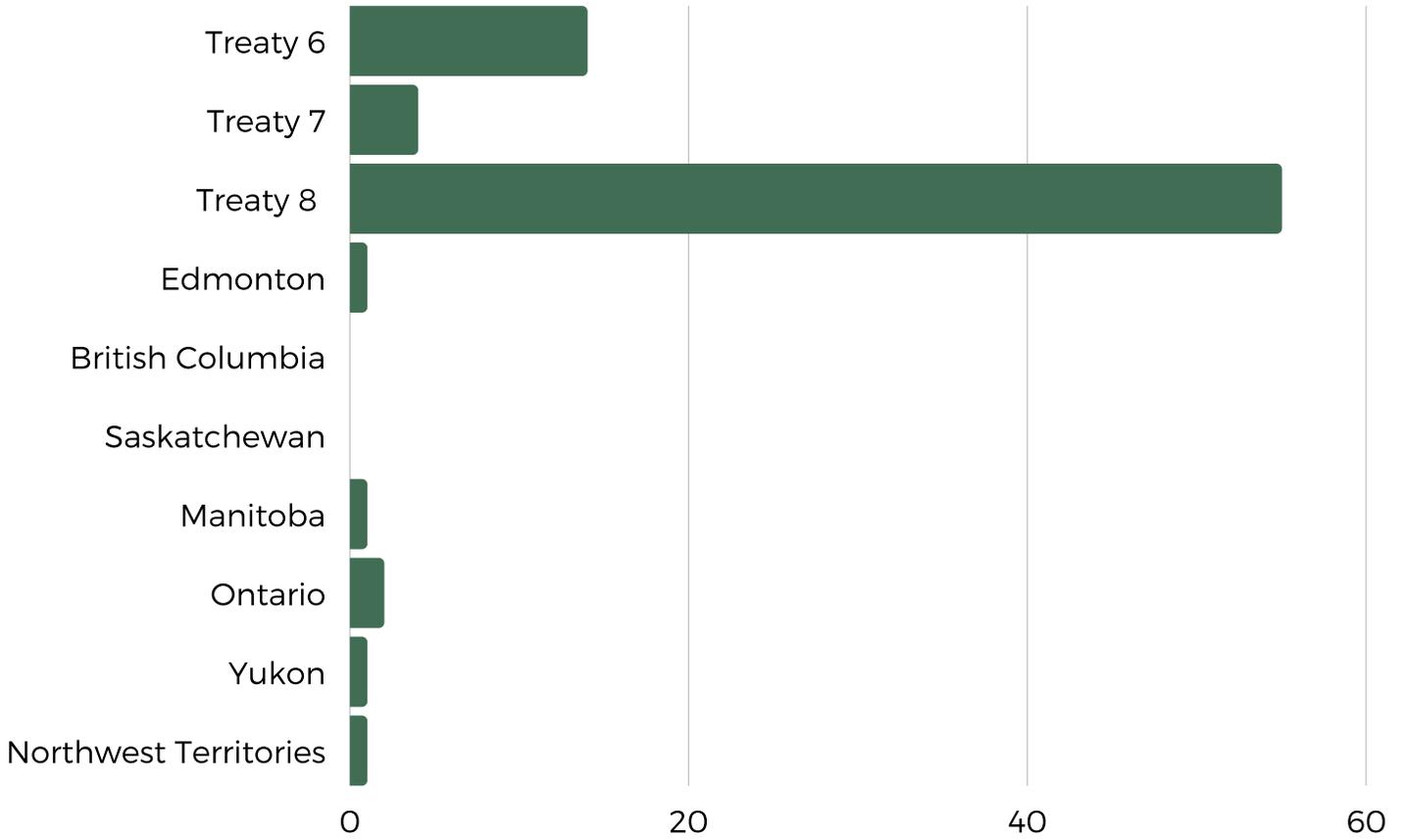
MALE



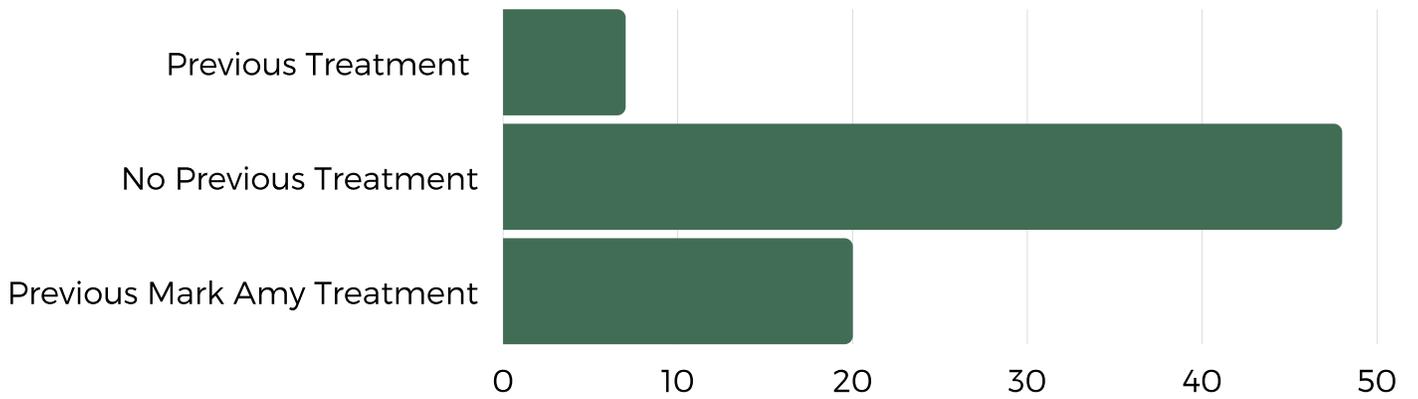
FEMALE



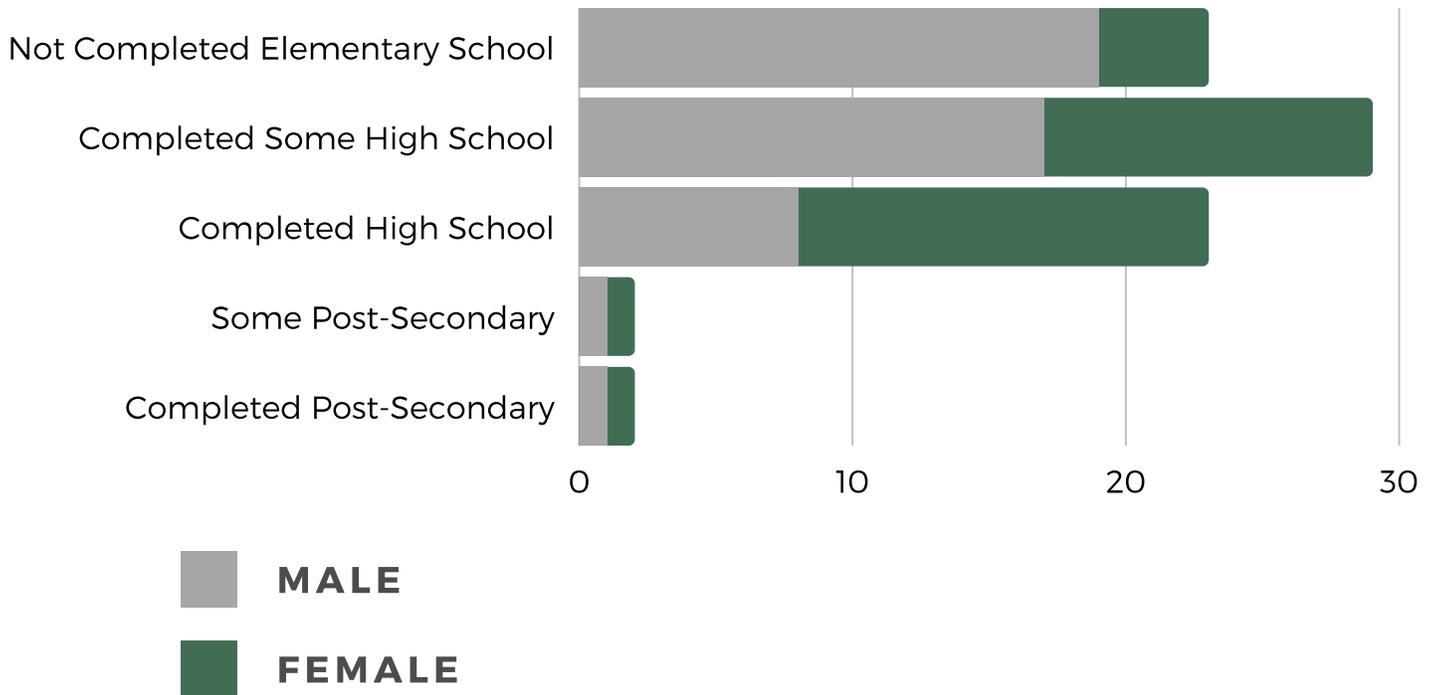
REGIONS



RECIDIVISM



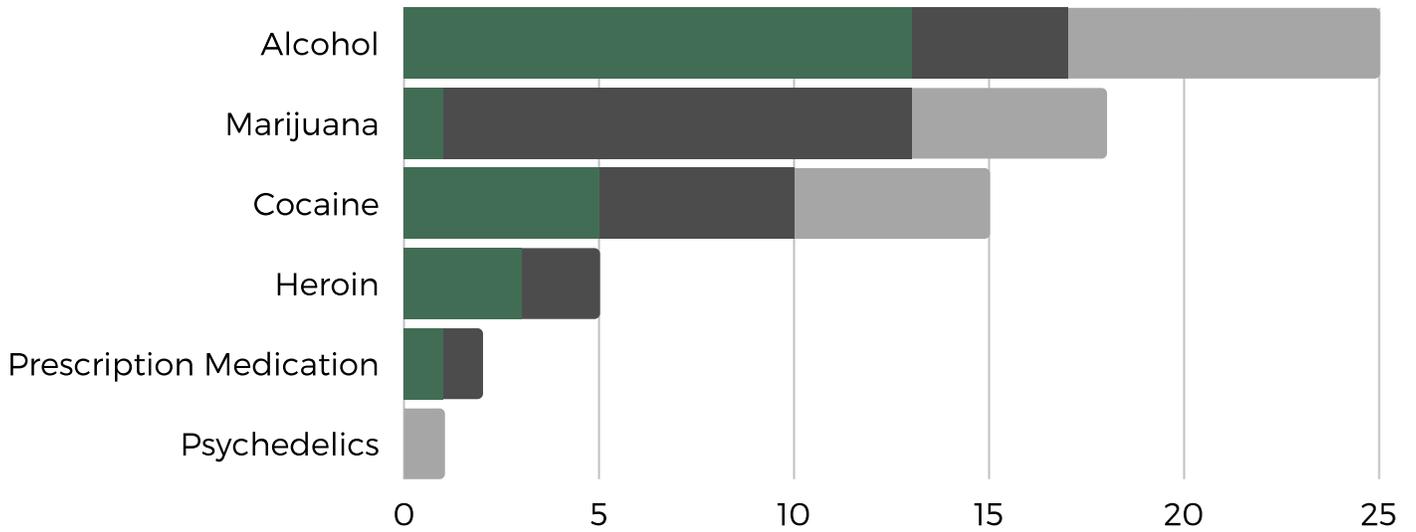
EDUCATION LEVELS



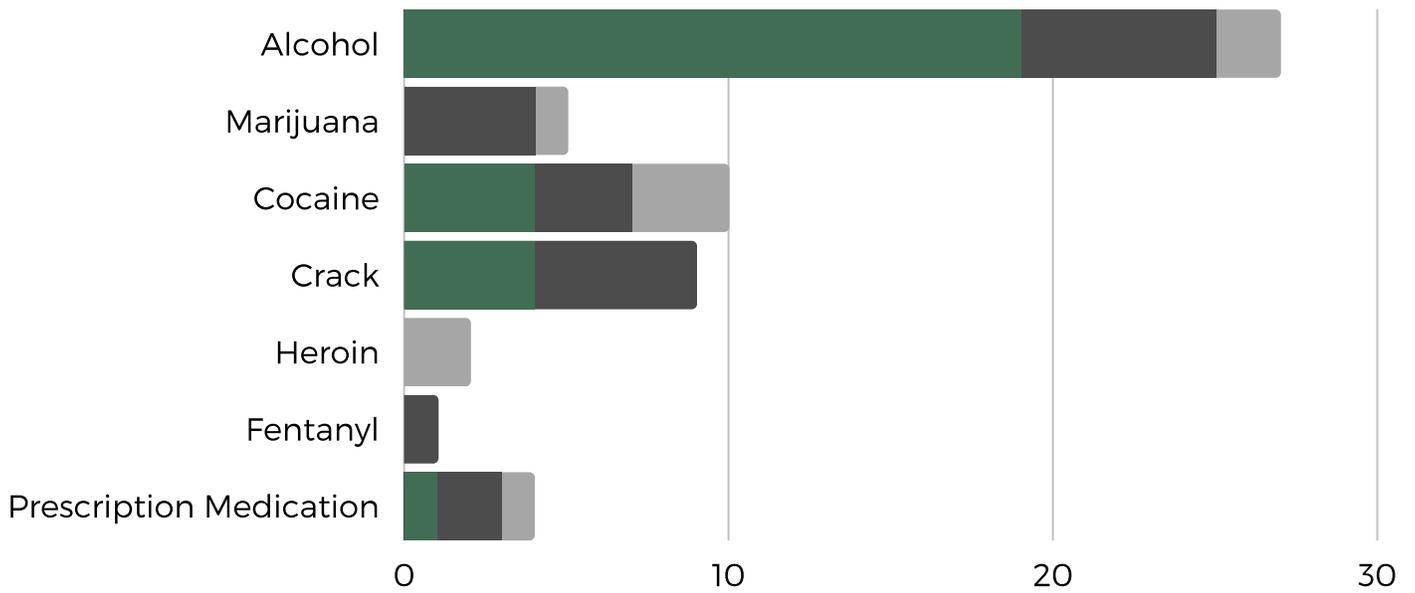
JUSTICE SYSTEM INVOLVEMENT



MALE SUBSTANCE ABUSE



FEMALE SUBSTANCE ABUSE



FIRST CHOICE **SECOND CHOICE** **THIRD CHOICE**

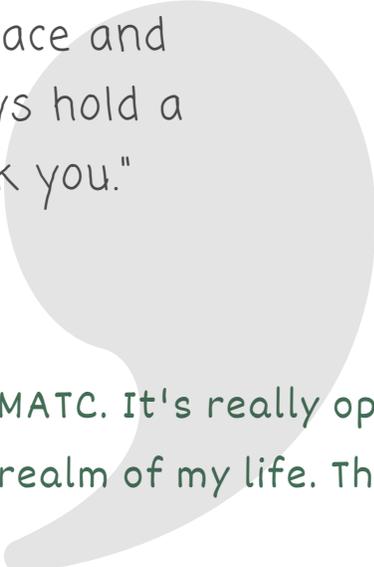
WHAT OUR CLIENTS ARE SAYING



"I can't thank you enough for the amount of love and acceptance I experienced while here. You are all literal angels on earth. Thank you so much!"

"MARK AMY IS AN AWESOME TREATMENT CENTRE AND THE COUNSELLORS HERE ARE VERY WONDERFUL PEOPLE. I WOULD RECOMMEND THIS TREATMENT CENTRE TO ANYBODY I MEET."

"Mark Amy has been an amazing experience for me. I feel so at peace and so safe here. This place will always hold a special place in my heart. Thank you."



"I loved my time at MATC. It's really opened my eyes to a whole new realm of my life. Thank you!"



COMMUNITY SERVICES

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Community Services team operates three programs under the 'Housing First' umbrella, with a collaborative goal of ending homelessness in Fort McMurray. The basic underlying principle of Housing First is that people are better able to move forward with their lives if they are first housed. This is as true for people experiencing homelessness and those with mental health and addictions issues as it is for anyone. 'Housing First' is a recovery-oriented approach to ending homelessness that centers on quickly moving people experiencing homelessness into independent and permanent housing and then providing additional supports and services as needed.

HIGHLIGHTS



62%
MALE

495

**REFERRALS MADE TO
OUTSIDE AGENCIES**



38%
FEMALE

43

**WARM TRANSFERS
TO OTHER AGENCIES**

20

PARTNER AGENCIES

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

CENTRALIZED INTAKE



261

**Total Centralized
Intake Clients**



167

**New Centralized
Intake Clients**

Any individual in the Wood Buffalo Region who has been living in Alberta for three months, is a Canadian Citizen/Permanent Resident, is 18 years of age, and who is homeless or at risk of homelessness (has received an eviction notice) is eligible to apply for the Housing First Programs. Our Centralized Intake Workers work as a part of the newly established coordinated access point system as the second stage of screening offered to a client presenting in need. They sit with the applicant and conduct a screening interview in order to determine if the person meets the requirements for eligibility in the Housing First Programs. Once it has been determined a person qualifies and as spaces become available, the client is transferred to one of the Housing First partner agencies or one of our Rapid Rehousing Case Managers here at the Wood Buffalo Wellness Society for ongoing case management and support.

Partnering agencies are; The Salvation Army, the Centre of Hope, and the YMCA of Fort McMurray. Should individuals not meet the eligibility requirements, they are offered outreach assistance in addressing barriers to their homelessness in the 2019-2020 fiscal year, the Centralized Intake workers served 261 individuals. There was a wide range of diversity in the ethnicity of clients served in the year April 2019 to March 2020.

GENDER



98

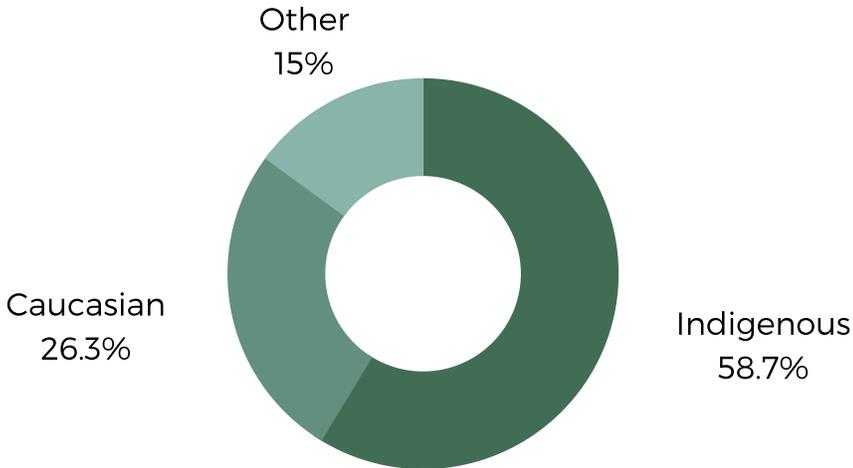
MALE



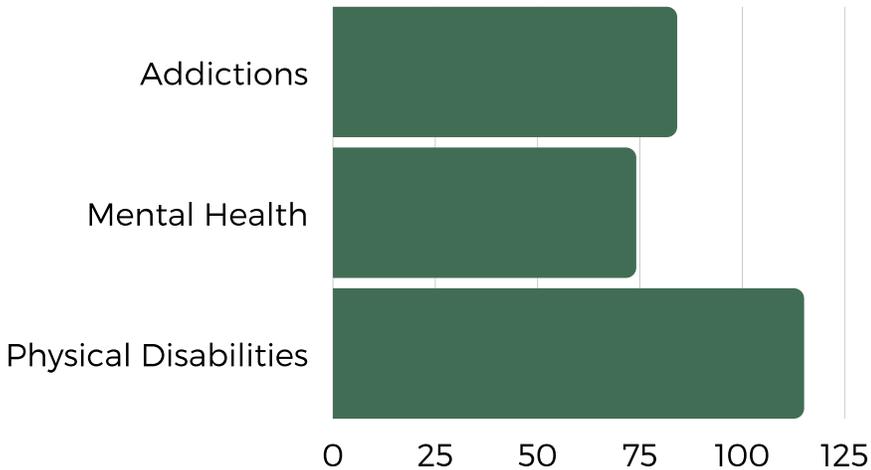
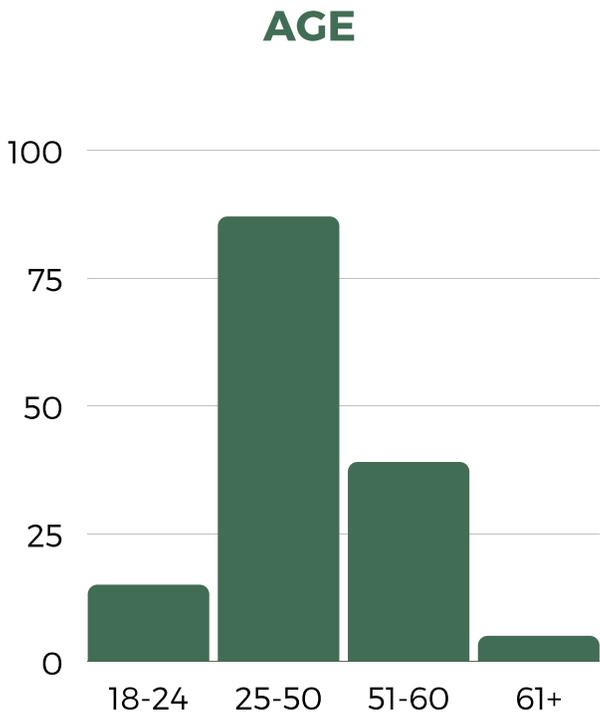
69

FEMALE

ETHNIC BREAKDOWN



BARRIERS





35

Clients were provided Housing Support



5

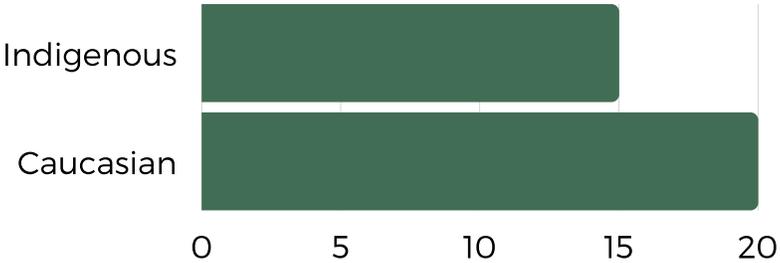
Successfully Graduated

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

RAPID REHOUSING

The Rapid Re-Housing Program serves individuals, couples, and families who are experiencing episodic or transitional (as opposed to chronic homelessness). Housing First has no “readiness requirements” and is focused on getting people into housing and out of shelters as quickly as possible. People who are eligible for Rapid Re-Housing are determined to have low to moderate needs and consequently the timeline for support is generally shorter. The WBWS Rapid Re-Housing Program consists of two caseworkers providing 2-6 months of intensive case management within the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo (unless extended for sufficient reasoning). Financial support is given through rental supplements and resources are available to rectify outstanding barriers deemed an impediment to securing housing, and create new awareness and skills that are needed for long term housing stability. Active participation in the program is mandatory with all participants working with their Case Worker on self-determined goals to maintain permanent housing and autonomy. Clients are screened through Centralized Intake for program suitability and entry.

ETHNIC BREAKDOWN



COMMUNITY SERVICES

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

OUTREACH

The Outreach Program within Wood Buffalo Wellness Society is designed to assist the clients who do not meet the requirements for the Housing First and Rapid Re-housing programs. The Outreach worker assists clients with finding secure and sustainable housing, finding employment, connecting clients with community resources and helping clients to navigate through the systems. The goal of the Outreach worker is to help clients reach their housing and personal goals so as to avoid them falling into homelessness or cycles of chronic or episodic homelessness. As well, the program assists clients on the long waiting lists of Rapid Rehousing and Housing First, who are in emergency situations.

The Outreach worker also spends time in the community connecting and networking with community agencies as well as liaising and advocating for clients. The program assists individuals/families to navigate through various community service agencies with focus being on housing stability. Clients can be self-referred, through Centralized Intake or other service agencies. This year the Outreach program served 99 persons and housed 60 with a 85% housing retainment success rate to date.



85%

Success Rate



60

Clients Housed



AGENCY PROGRAM SUCCESSSES AND CHALLENGES

With the majority of the highlighted challenges we have been able to rise above and create opportunities for growth and increased capacity of our agency moving forward, so we are proud to report that many of the highlighted challenges have ultimately blossomed into successes.

MARK AMY TREATMENT CENTRE

The transition from a co-management model back to a single Executive Director proved to be challenging throughout the year ultimately resulting in a high staff turn over within MATC.

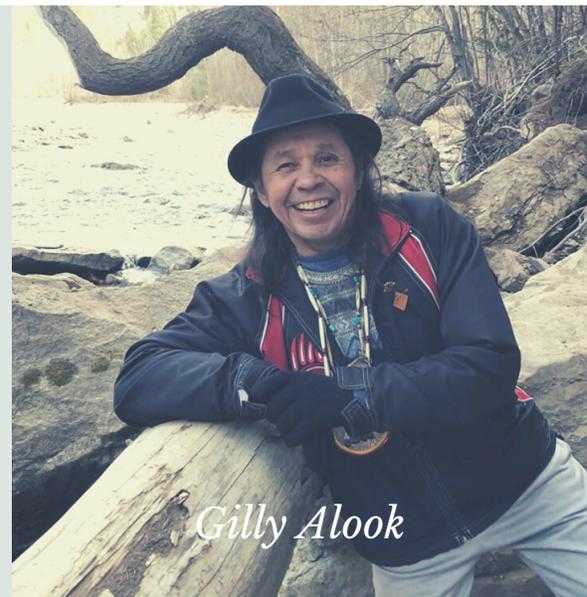
The marijuana plant being built near MATC was placed on hold in the spring of 2020.

We saw a marked improvement in our overall statistics over the previous year. Our completion rate improved to 60% from 54%, not a huge improvement but this is offset with the amount of longer term stays and re-iterate clients who have maintained sobriety now months after leaving our program. Our occupancy rate for Indigenous Service Canada beds jumped from 73% last year to 82% this year. Our occupancy rate for our United Way beds was 100% this year. Our overall occupancy jumped from 63% last year to 84% this year. Our bed utilization rate for the program sat at a very healthy 91% overall. A huge program success!

A challenge has certainly been attracting a suitable candidate for our in-house Elder position. When the Red Cross funding was grated the position was built for a certain person but they were only available for half of the contract. With his retirement, it has left a huge gap in what we are actually able to attract for skills and abilities for an in house Elder. The solution has been to contract a number of Elders, knowledge Keepers and artisans. This has turned into a great success as we have diversified our knowledge base and now work with a number of well known and respected Elders from across the province and our community.

46

ELDER PARTICIPATED
COMMUNITY EVENTS,
TEACHINGS AND BLESSINGS



Gilly Alook

A huge success has been our relationships built and solidified with the local First Nation NNADAP and Health and Wellness Programs. This has been identified for a number of years as something desired but within the last year it has become more of a priority to our management and staff team. We are now partnering with a number of local groups to provide in community programming and are planning for much more in future.

MATC moved to continuous intake in August 2019. Despite an adjustment period and fairly low occupancy, we were able to turn things around and ended out our year with some of the best occupancy and utilization rates that we have seen for several years.

Need vs capacity continues to be a challenge for us. Our program is highly sought after but we are a small program. For every one client we can accept, we formally turn away 2.4 persons with much more choosing not to submit applications due to our waitlists. Increasing our bed capacity by increasing our usable square footage or moving classroom and recreational spaces to an external building and converting these spaces to bedrooms would allow us to increase our number of beds and person served. Unfortunately, we may be limited further by our waste water management system.

Staffing continues to be a challenge in the region. Although we have made great strides in diversifying funding and closing the regional wage gap. The wage gap regionally continues to exist making recruitment of quality counsellors difficult.

Fundraising, events, and raffle profits are down drastically in the region, which equates to less funding availability in the streams that we turn to, to supplement our core funding. This is directly correlated with the downturn in the regional economy post wild fire. Despite this, we held our very first fundraising Casino in October 2019 which brought in a significant contribution to our programming. Fundraisers planned for the spring months were placed on hold as well due to the pandemic.

COMMUNITY SERVICES

An over shadowing challenge this year would most certainly be the Pandemic. In late March, near year end the world responded and much of Canada was shuttered in out of necessity for protection of spread from a virus that we knew very little about. We closed our doors during the third week of March with all staff beginning work from home. Over the next weeks and months we continued to support our clients in isolation, adapting methods in how we connected to our clients ensuring all were checked on, had their basic needs met for food and medication and all were supported in maintaining good health or had access to health and shelter services if they became ill.



A hold on social housing from the province has created great challenges for our clients. In order to successfully graduate clients on, we need to have them situated in housing that is sustainable independently. With the social housing freeze, Wood Buffalo Housing is unable to accept clients who would need subsidized rent, therefore we have clients sitting on case load longer than typical or entering into situations where they may be over extending their resources, thereby setting themselves up for future issues with tenancy.

With the closure of Marshall House in January 2020, we were tasked to find housing for ten of the individuals previously housed there. Our team rallied and through Outreach we were able to secure housing for all ten within the community.

In 2018 our community and the homeless serving agencies endeavored to put in place a coordinated access system for persons needing to be screened and enter into the housing first system. There were 8 access points established with agencies such as Alberta Health Services, Salvation Army mat program and North Reach street outreach. Clients are initially screened at their first point of contact and the qualified screenings are then passed on to our Centralized Intake program for more in-depth evaluation. After much coordination and tweaking by both our Centralized Intake team and the RMWB staff, the 'By Name List' system became fully operational in June 2019.

