

ANNUAL REPORT 2021-2022

WOOD BUFFALO WELLNESS SOCIETY



ABOUT US

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



WHAT WE ACCOMPLISHED

VIRTUAL TREATMENT

56 day treatment program offered virtually to connect individuals struggling with addiction support during covid-19



ROUND DANCE

In partnership with #468 First Nation, over 300 community members, guests and allies attended



CULTURAL CAMP

10 day on the land teachings and activities



GRADUATIONS

20 individuals successfully graduated from our housing program



Between our Residential and Virtual treatment programs we were able to assist **91 individuals** with addictions recovery in Canada.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

The past year has been one of growth and change for our organization. With lessons learnt and a new perspective on best practices emerging from the pandemic, we pivoted and adapted, improving, and solidifying ourselves in the work we do in our region.

For our Mark Amy program, we re-opened our residential program post-pandemic in the fall of 2021. After being fully operational we found new challenges of operating a program during a pandemic, and increased pressures from the nature of the drugs clients sought treatment for.

The insidious drug epidemic has taken many lives in recent years and this only seems to be growing in concern. Sadly, where it used to be rare, now it is often that we hear news of a past client's passing or that a current client's treatment is impacted by the overdose loss of family and friends. This tragic reality has increased our desire to do all that we can to assist our clients on their recovery journey, extending past our residential program.

A definite added challenge is the growing presence of newer drugs and the complications that come with their use, which has directly impacted our completion rates and forced us to implement adaptations to our programming and intake process. Clients are entering into treatment having not fully detoxed or experiencing psychosis days or even weeks into their treatment cycles and then leave the program most often confused and distressed and facing and even higher likelihood of relapse. This familiar scenario has solidified the importance of our strong relationship with our local detox centre. Our clients desperately want the help and now more than ever, we see the importance of a pre-treatment full detox program.



JO-ANNE PACKHAM
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Through the pandemic we learned that we must focus more efforts into supporting clients post treatment and now have dedicated staff that work with our clients during and after treatment. Our alumni group and network is growing with our alumni returning to the centre for cultural programming or on the land camps and supporting us in volunteer opportunities, as well as supporting newer clients just entering their recovery journey. Our virtual aftercare groups have both grown and strengthened in numbers. It's wonderful to see these groups meeting in person and we have been grateful to our community partners who have provided us space for programming within the community. We have also seen clients transition from our virtual program into our residential and cultural programming, which has been a great success.

Still in process is the launch of our women's sober living homes. This delay is largely due to the focus and resources being on launching the Tawâw program. We have forged some solid partnerships and mentors in the sober living sector that have been instrumental in us getting organized and (almost) ready to go! Expect to see big things from us in the world of post and pre treatment care within the coming year.

Our cultural program has strengthened in the last year, largely accredited to a dedicated Cultural Program Coordinator. We held two on the land camps in the summer of 2021 and hosted a Round Dance and several community lodge days with our relatives at the Fort McMurry First Nation. Activities like hide tanning and sewing ribbon skirts and shirts are now a regular part of each round. The Tawâw program has been a big undertaking for our society, but we continue to forge ahead with the support of the community and our funders. Tawâw, aptly named from the Cree word, meaning, "Come in, you are welcome here," is a permanent, supportive, harm reduction model, the first of its kind north of Edmonton. Our partnership with the McMurray Métis group continues although due to pre-existing commitments the partnership has changed a bit. We look forward to them joining us again once we are in our building and we plan to revisit and reinvest in the shared goals for the clients we serve. Niginan Housing Ventures who operate Ambrose Place in Edmonton, the program that ours is modelled after, has been an invaluable resource to us in our planning. A more formal partnership with Niginan is being planned as the program rolls out in the 2022-2023 year. Their expertise in the field is second to none; they truly are the trailblazers.

At the time of this letter writing, we are in the final stages of closing on the purchase of a building in the downtown core which will become the facility Tawâw will operate within. It will also become the administration hub for our society. We anticipate being able to house clients in the early months of 2023, although it will take at least a year to a year and a half to complete renovations and be functioning at full capacity. We are in the planning stage with Alberta Health Services to provide funding and positions for the full breadth of services needed to offer a program such as this. We continue to seek other funding for positions and programming and plan on launching a capital project campaign in the coming months. 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 daily. 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 investment into our programming saves and changes lives. To the helpers and change makers who we proudly call our staff, thank you! Your dedication to our clients and our community, often at the expense of your own sleep, families, and hearts, does not go unnoticed.

Finally, I want to acknowledge the most important group of persons in this whole report, the clientele that we serve. Some days, it doesn't seem possible that things will turn around for you, but they will, just keep going! It takes unbelievable courage to present yourself and all your vulnerabilities and put in the work to heal. We see you. The good life, miyopimatisiwin is possible; change is possible; peace and happiness is possible. Keep going! We are proud of you.

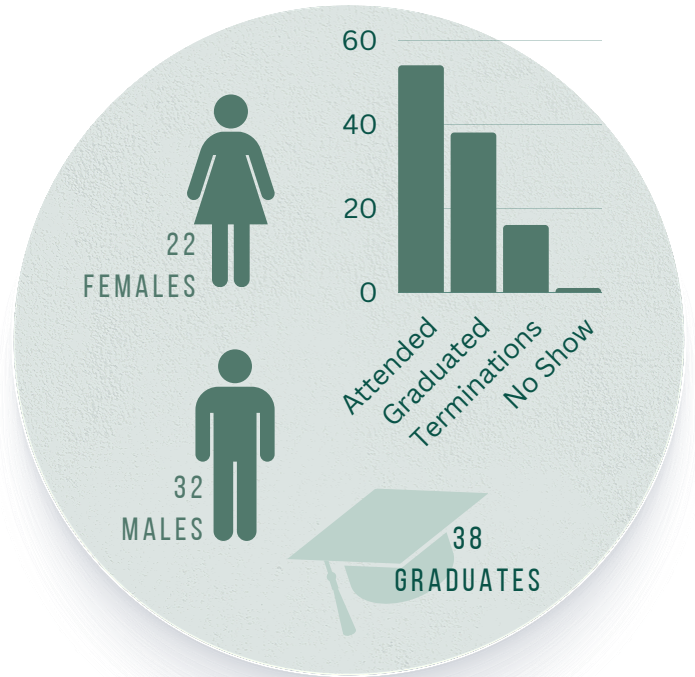
Kinanâskōmitin/Chi-Miigwetch



Jo-Anne Packham
Executive Director

MARK AMY TREATMENT CENTRE

The Mark Amy Treatment Centre (MATC) Residential program re-opened on September 7, 2021 and saw 3.5 consecutive cycles of the 56-day program be delivered during this fiscal reporting period. The residential program blends a Westernized clinical approach with a culturally based healing model to deliver a holistic and two-eyed program for addressing problematic substance-misuse. Individuals are awarded opportunities to reconnect with their cultural identities while learning evidenced based CBT and DBT tools to heal and create a new path for themselves. The residential program is a highly sought after and well recommended program for Indigenous individuals of all walks of life. In this reporting period we saw:

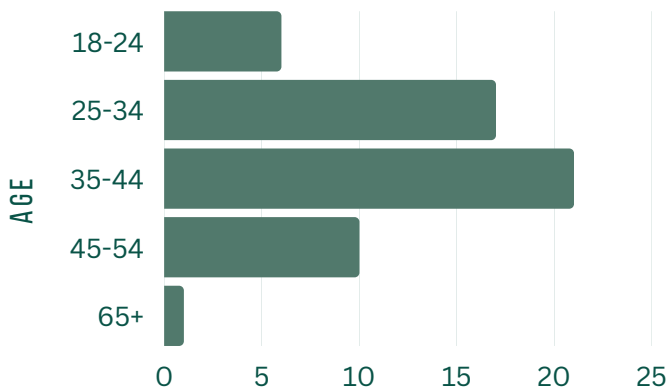


SUCCESSSES

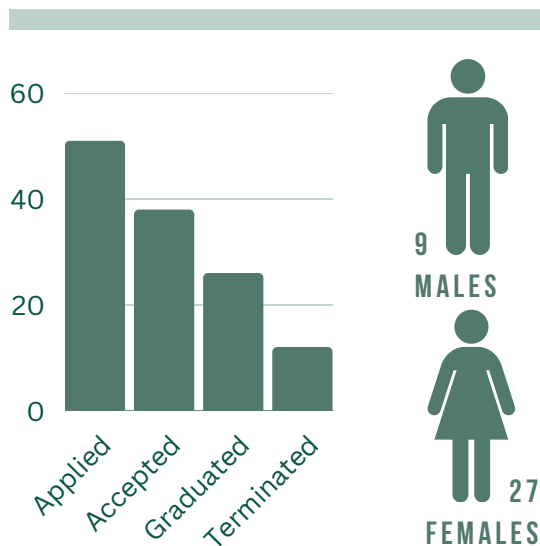
- The ability to re-open our residential program after closure due to Covid-19
- Fully staffed team
- Many cultural opportunities with a wide array of guests, Knowledge keepers and Elders

CHALLENGES

- Recruitment of qualified Indigenous staff
- Increased use of Methamphetamine amongst residents resulting in higher amounts of psychosis and mental health concerns
- Covid-19 pandemic and its subsequent restrictions and limitations



VIRTUAL TREATMENT



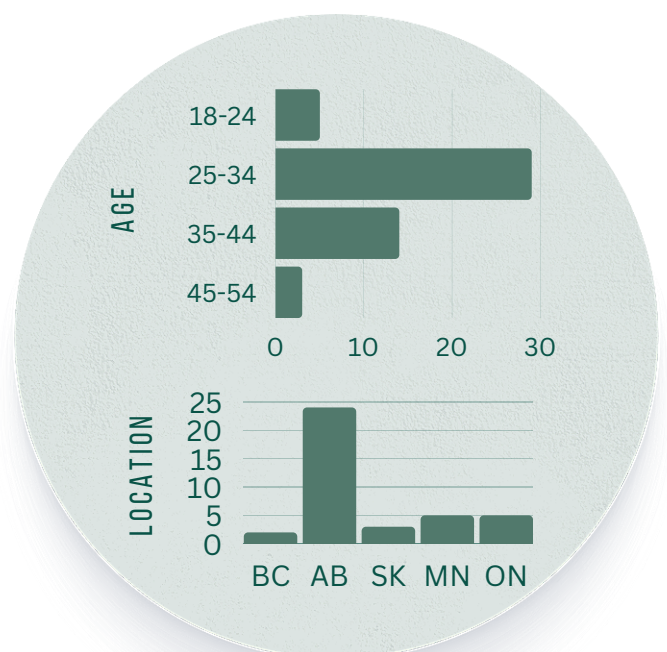
The MATC virtual treatment program is a condensed and intensive version of our regular 56-day residential program, and was offered from April 26-June 4 and again from June 14-July 30. Similar to our residential program, the virtual program covered daily group therapy, individual counselling, ceremony and cultural teachings, group education, daily light physical activity and therapeutic art. The program was delivered through missed platforms and welcomed individuals from all across Canada. 'Kits' were shipped to each participant and contained all of the necessary tools, supplies and resources to participate in the program. We partnered with the Thunderbird Partnership to procure data enable tablets, limiting the barriers individuals would face in accessing treatment services.

SUCCESSSES

- Individuals with pre-existing barriers to attending treatment were afforded the ability to complete a 6-week program
- MATC was able to still deliver treatment despite Covid-19 infringements

CHALLENGES

- With virtual service delivery comes a wealth of technology related challenges.
- Virtual services were allowed on self-referral basis which created challenges in terms of accountability, development of an in-community support network and challenges in getting the tablets back from participants



CULTURAL TEACHINGS AND EVENTS

CULTURAL CAMP

August 10-19 on the land culture camp hosted in partnership with the Chipewyan Prairie First Nation and held on beautiful grounds next to the Cowpar lake near Janvier, Alberta. Culture camp was open to residents all across Canada, seeing individuals attending from Fort Chipewyan, Saskatchewan, Ottawa and Vancouver. We welcomed 3 families comprised of 2 parents + 4 kids, 1 parent + 3 kids, 1 parent + 3 kids and 2 single individuals. These individuals shared 10 days of cultural land based activities such as moose meat making, berry and medicine picking, fishing, hide scraping and hunting.



KNOWLEDGE KEEPER VIRTUAL TEACHINGS

Cultural Coordinator, Adrian LaChance ran a series of virtual cultural teaching sessions which were highly attended and spoken of in community. Topics ranged from Medicine Wheel teachings, ceremony for beginners, natural law, feeding the fire ceremony, sweat lodge teachings and many many more. These sessions halted around July when efforts were directed towards launching the residential program



SUPPORT GROUPS



WOMEN'S GROUP

The women's support group is a hybrid zoom/in person group that happens weekly and is hosted by our Aftercare Coordinator. The group is a general recovery oriented group where women can come together to be supported by other women that are in or affected by addiction. This group is open to all who identify as female or two-spirit, and welcomes a variety of guest speakers regularly. Some topics have included LGBTQ2S+ awareness, yoga, art therapy, Indigenous led art sessions and general recovery related topics. Women are given a safe space to connect, build community and support one another.



CO-ED SUPPORT GROUP

The Co-ed Addictions support/Wellbriety meeting is hosted virtually 2 times per week and is hosted by two of our Support Staff. The meeting follows the basic principles of Wellbriety and shares the spotlight with general recovery and cultural support to those impacted directly and indirectly by addiction. The meeting is typically attended and supported by Elders and sees guests from all across Canada.



COMMUNITY SERVICES



CENTRALIZED INTAKE



HOUSING FIRST



RAPID REHOUSING



OUTREACH



“Housing is not contingent upon readiness, or on ‘compliance’ (for instance, sobriety). Rather, it is a rights-based intervention rooted in the philosophy that all people deserve housing, and that adequate housing is a precondition for recovery.”

-Referenced: Housing First. (n.d.). Retrieved September 21, 2015

CENTRALIZED INTAKE

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 or Rapid Re-Housing Programs. Our Centralized Intake Workers interact with the applicant and conduct a screening interview to determine if the person meets the requirements for eligibility in the Housing First or Rapid Re-Housing Programs.

Our mandate is to work with the chronically homeless individuals that present with multiple barriers and will need Intense Case Management to secure affordable and permanent housing. We receive many referrals for individuals experiencing different forms of homelessness:

- Single mothers/fathers transitioning to a new life
- Families experiencing job loss
- Chronically homeless individual who has slept on the street for numerous years
- Episodic homeless individuals needing support to get back on their feet
- Couch surfers
- Hidden Homelessness

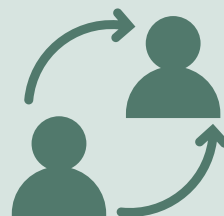
CENTRALIZED INTAKE BY NUMBERS



VI SPDATS

186 TOTAL

63 Telephone
123 Access Point Support



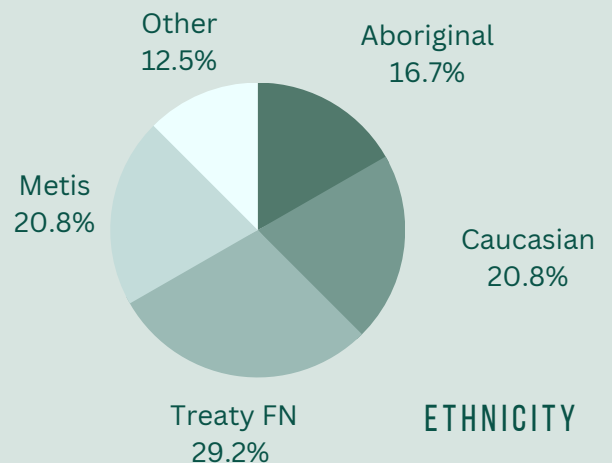
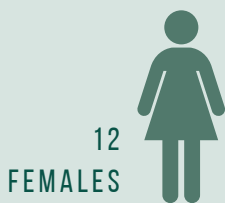
139 REFERRALS

WARM TRANSFERS 97

HOUSING FIRST

Housing First Case Managers provide ongoing supports and services to clients to help them maintain their housing and stability in different aspects of life. This intensive case management scopes a 12 month program, but can be extended (with sufficient reasoning) for those individuals in need of further supports for a longer duration of time. Case Managers act as a positive change agent in assisting families or individuals holistically, in achieving and again, maintaining housing which is located with assistance of the worker in the private housing market of a client's choice within the community. Clients will work together with their Case Manager to address barriers to attaining/maintaining safe, stable housing and to work on those chosen goals of self-sufficiency and autonomy. Case Managers help clients to create and discover these meaningful goals and provide them with the support to work on these independently picked goals. They also work closely with other agencies to provide holistic supports in different kinds of struggles our clients may face. Our clients range from single mothers with small or large families, single individual adults, families experiencing job loss, couples, or the chronic or episodic homeless that have slept on the streets and in shelters for numerous years. A main goal of this program is to support each client in obtaining secure, permanent housing and obtaining the skills, knowledge, and supports necessary to maintain their own housing stability.

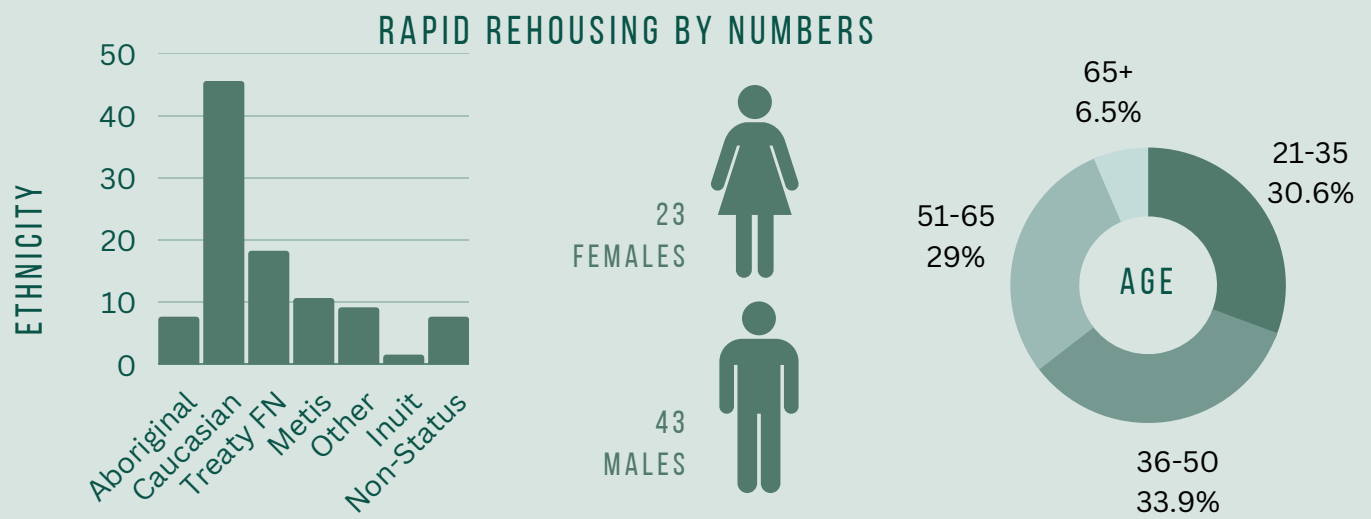
HOUSING FIRST BY NUMBERS



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 4-6 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 that are deemed an impediment to securing housing. 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.



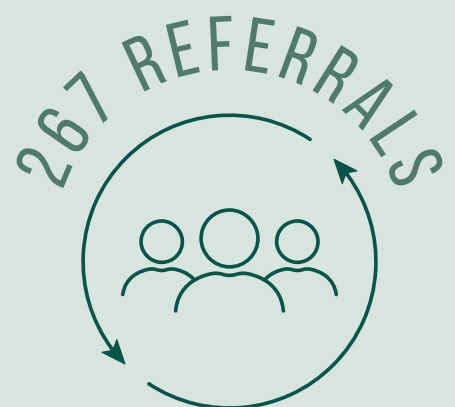
OUTREACH

The Outreach program is comprised of one Outreach worker, who assists individuals that do not qualify for Housing First programming, with finding secure and sustainable housing, employment or a funding source, connecting with community resources, and helping individuals to navigate through the appropriate systems to successfully meet their needs. The main goal of the Outreach program is to help individuals reach their housing and personal goals and help prevent them from falling into chronic homelessness. As well, the Outreach worker assists individuals on the long waiting lists for Rapid Rehousing or Housing First, who are in emergency situations and require emergency housing assistance. The Outreach worker spends a considerable amount of time in the community connecting and networking with community agencies and supports through a variety of means, including participating in community networking groups such as CCOT (Collaborative Community Outreach Team). As an outreach worker, numerous hours are spent listening to people's stories, building relationships, assisting in formulating a plan, and making clients feel welcome and comfortable in an office environment. The Outreach worker works with the clients to address barriers and provide supports to individuals in obtaining affordable housing.

OUTREACH BY NUMBERS



CLIENTS SERVED



STAFFING

MARK AMY TREATMENT CENTRE

We currently have 5 full time Addiction Counsellors/ peer support workers. 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, an Aftercare Coordinator and Administrative Manager as well as support staff including a Cultural Coordinator, Intake/Admin, cook and night attendants and a handful of casual support workers. Elders and Knowledge keepers are contracted to provide ceremony, cultural teachings, and support to clients and staff. An integral part of our team is also our Clinical Consultant who meets with our staff bi-weekly for case reviews, does staff cohort training specific to our needs and provides trauma based individual therapy to our clients on site and online. Recruiting a retaining persons of Indigenous ancestry in many positions continues to be a challenge, however we are working on strategies to draw in talents and build capacity within our existing community and staff compliment.



COMMUNITY SERVICES

Our Team Lead supervises a staff cohort consisting of two Centralized Intake Workers, and 5 Case Managers in our Housing First, Rapid Rehousing and Outreach programs. Additionally we have the Tawâw Program Coordinator who currently is involved in the program set up and design. All are supported by our Administration Manager.





A PICTURE SAYS A THOUSAND WORDS...







Thank you

to all our funders and donors



Health
Canada

Santé
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REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY
OF WOOD BUFFALO



United Way
Fort McMurray
and Wood Buffalo