



## Mitch finds a home, peace-of-mind, and a job

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*Mitch at The Kettle on Burrard, a supportive housing building for youth and adults experiencing mental health challenges. It's been his home for the past two years.*



Mitch's story, sadly, isn't that uncommon. He got into drugs at a young age, lacked motivation, and dropped out of high school at 16 – and further exacerbating a descent into mayhem and madness was an undiagnosed mental health issue. His parents, finally exhausted, exasperated, and completely confounded by his erratic behaviour, kicked him out of the house.

Mitch spent a couple of years living on the streets – getting drugs wherever and from whomever he could. He foraged garbage bins for food, just barely eating enough to stay alive. He was emaciated, hallucinating, and entirely vulnerable on the street.

“There were lots of times that I'd wake-up and not know how I got there,” he says. His meagre belongings were often stolen.

“Eventually a community service worker found Mitch low-barrier housing in a single room occupancy hotel – where housing isn't dependent on someone being “clean” – and linked him up with

government assistance. However, Mitch continued to use meth on a daily basis, and rarely left his room. Neighbours, concerned with his erratic behaviour and fearing for his safety, called the police. They took Mitch to St. Paul's Psychiatric Ward where he saw a psychiatrist, finally got a diagnosis, starting taking medication, and got the support he needed from Providence Health Care's Inner City Youth Mental Health Program.

When he was released from hospital, Mitch's support team found him temporary housing before more stable housing became available at The Kettle on Burrard, a 16-story building, with 140 units for youth and adults living with mental health challenges. Additional support services for youth are provided by Directions, a drop-in youth centre next door.

Streetohome Foundation contributed \$2.8 million towards the construction of The Kettle.

The combination of housing and the support services provided by the Inner

City Youth Mental Health Program has given Mitch the stability and structure he needs. He's made a lot of friends in the building – and participates in many social activities such as outings to baseball and hockey games, taekwondo lessons, and barbecues.

And, most recently, Mitch found a job as a dishwasher at a local sports bar, which he says keeps him occupied and out of trouble. An infectious grin comes across his face when he speaks about being hired. “It was a real confidence booster. It felt really good to have someone believe in me and hire me. I feel like I'm contributing in a positive way to society.”

For now, the extra money enables Mitch to buy more food and clothing – he's gained 40 lbs in the last two years on what is still a slight frame. In the future, Mitch wants to save enough money to move out and live independently. He dreams about traveling and going back to school.

He's also back in touch with his parents and slowly working on mending relationships.

# A Message from Rob Turnbull



*Rob Turnbull, President and CEO, and Lloyd Craig, Vice-Chair, Streetohome Foundation in the media room at Directions Youth 24 Hour Drop-in Centre, where youth can get a hot meal and access showers and laundry services. When they're ready, they can access longer term services such as job skills and employment programs.*

The most recent homeless count numbers released in July 2016 identified 1,847 homeless individuals this year, roughly a six percent increase from last year's count, or another 101 people. We know we can't simply build ourselves out of homelessness, but, rather, we need creative approaches and strong partnerships to address the challenges we face.

Consequently, this year, our focus has turned to developing a comprehensive approach to homelessness prevention that includes better understanding the flow of individuals from living on the streets and residing in shelters, to living in supportive housing and ultimately moving on to independent living. We know that for individuals to progress and thrive, we need to look at the whole person and address their housing, health, employment and education goals.

Streetohome's 4-legged stool provides a visual representation of the key elements required for individuals' to reach their full potential:

- 1) Housing is provided based on an individual's needs and their intentions, rather than a one-size fits all approach. For example, someone on the street may not want to enter supportive housing immediately, but prefer to deal with their addiction issues first, by entering a live-in addiction recovery facility. On the other hand, shelter residents may prefer to access employment training and education and move directly to independent living.
- 2) Health supports include medical, vision, dental care, addiction services (including withdrawal management), and mental health services.
- 3) Employment involves connecting individuals with training/education and



job opportunities, and supports so they can set and meet their employment and life goals.

4) Education encompasses not only traditional education opportunities, but life-skills training from cooking and cleaning to paying bills to building social skills and community networks.

In order for an individual to feel secure and supported, all four legs of the stool need to be firmly attached. If one leg is missing or wobbly, an individual can easily fall off.

Furthermore, the concept of safety: personal, gender and cultural is incorporated throughout all four domains. This ensures that services are inclusive and accommodating and clients feel welcome. This avoids stigma and promotes belonging

We look forward to bringing you news about initiatives under each of the four legs of our stool. In this issue, we focus on employment, specifically the importance of stable, paid work in turning around one individual's life (read our cover story on Mitch) and a one-on-one with Ida Goodreau, Chair of the Employment Access Committee, reflecting on broader, systemic changes required to bridge the gaps between employers and workers.

We hope you enjoy reading this issue.

**Rob Turnbull, Ph.D., CHE**  
President & CEO, Streetohome Foundation

## Co:Here groundbreaking



**It's official! – Co:Here, a unique supportive housing project, with employment options for at-risk individuals has broken ground. Construction will be complete in Fall 2017. For more information, please visit [www.streetohome/projects/cohere](http://www.streetohome/projects/cohere).**

# One-on-one with Ida Goodreau



*Ida is the former CEO of Vancouver Coastal Health Authority. She has been a Streetohome Board Member since 2008, when the Foundation was founded.*

*Ida currently sits on the boards of Fortis Inc., Fortis BC, and Pharmasave. Ida also devotes a significant amount of her time to the non-profit and community sector and, in addition to Streetohome, she is Chair, Genome BC, a board member of the Canada West Foundation, and past board member of the Vancouver Foundation.*

## **Why did you join the Streetohome Board?**

At the time, I was CEO of Vancouver Coastal Health and we were committed to initiatives to support the treatment and recovery of vulnerable people, especially in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside.

We worked with many other groups and organizations united by the same goal, but Streetohome was the first organization to bring the private sector and business into an informal coalition with health, provincial and municipal governments, police and NGO's. Streetohome also brought a clear focus and direction with Housing First as the foremost plank in a cohesive strategy to address homelessness and its causes and attendant consequences. It has been amazing to see what has been accomplished.

## **Why did you want to lead the Employment Access Committee (EAC)?**

I was particularly pleased to be asked to Chair the Employment Access

Committee. The title is actually a bit of a misnomer as we are focused on ensuring access to purposeful activity for homeless and vulnerable populations – whether that is conventional employment, volunteering, or working in social enterprises.

It is our belief, supported by good research, that individuals need not only a home and appropriate healthcare and social supports, but also activities to fill their day – activities which fill them with a sense of purpose, allow

them to be productive and creative, to be part of a team or organization, to learn new skills and develop talents, and, of course, to become financially independent when possible.

Streetohome has an opportunity to create bridges and links between potential employers, social enterprises and volunteer organizations and the vulnerable folks who want to find employment opportunities. Our Committee would like to help make these connections and enablers happen on a larger, system-wide level.

## **What are the deliverables for the EAC?**

The Committee has been working on creating a strategy which will first address how to bring employers and potential employees together – because right now it is difficult for employers to identify potential job applicants and vice-versa. Conventional employment recruitment models don't work very well for people who are homeless, at risk, or in recovery.

The second aspect of the strategy focuses on identifying and removing barriers to employment or purposeful activity – including skills training and education, lifestyle supports such as daycare, transportation, financial incentives, and coordination with housing and health providers for vulnerable, but motivated, people; and supports, education and incentives

for employers, social enterprises and volunteers.

Those are high-level systemic goals; in addition, we hope to be able to support specific on-the-ground initiatives where Streetohome can be a catalyst, facilitator, champion and possibly funder.

## **What 'aha' moments have you had – if any – while leading the EAC?**

The 'aha' moment for me was more a 'YES' – we can do so much more in our city and our province to provide opportunities for vulnerable populations. So many exciting small-scale initiatives are already underway with impressive, inspiring results. The challenge is to take the learnings from these projects and scale them up so that opportunities for the appropriate 'purposeful activity' are available to homeless, at-risk and recovering people in our community.

A full and rewarding life requires not just decent housing, good health and social supports, but also access to meaningful and creative activities and the potential to contribute and give back, thereby increasing self-respect and providing pride in accomplishment.

## **What would people be surprised to learn about you?**

That question always makes me wish I had some exciting hobby or activity – sky-diving, mountain-climbing, opera singing. Unfortunately I can claim none of those things and instead spend my free time at my cabin on Bowen Island watching the deer nibble away at the garden.

## **What keeps you up at night?**

Other than a good book and the occasional deadline, very little. I have learned that no problem actually improves with my sleeplessness. But in fact some problems are dealt with more effectively if I have had a good night's sleep.

## **What gets you up in the morning?**

I still believe the world can be a better place. I no longer believe it is quite as simple as I once thought it was, but all each of us can do is make the effort.

# Unique training opportunities for vulnerable individuals

Access to training and education opportunities can be a key pathway out of homelessness to employment and financial and social stability. There are many community based programs that help individuals gain the skills and confidence they need to pursue purposeful activity (volunteer role) or employment. Streetohome is proud to collaborate with the following agencies to provide opportunities for individuals living in supportive housing, residing in shelters, exiting corrections or transitioning from addiction treatment and recovery programs.

## Hey, I've got a Knack for that...

Potluck's Knack Program provides individuals who may be experiencing barriers to traditional employment an opportunity to gain digital badges for workplace-related skills. The badges give employers the confidence that potential hires have fundamental skills



in areas such as teamwork, time management and professionalism through weekly two-hour workshops.

“Knack prepares an individual to get the skills they need, understand how to navigate the workplace and keep a job,” says Anna Migicovsky, who manages the Knack Program.

The eight soft skills are transferable no matter which industry a person is eventually hired for. However, if an individual is interested in a career in the hospitality industry, they can take courses offered by Potluck to learn how to work in a commercial kitchen.

Once an individual is ready, Knack also connects them to potential employers.

## Squamish Nation Trades Centre... building futures

Squamish Nation Trades Centre (SNTC), in collaboration with Kwantlen Polytechnic University, provides free tuition, culturally sensitive trade training and employment opportunities for Aboriginal youth and adults at its training centres in Squamish and North Vancouver. This year, through a unique collaboration with Streetohome, SNTC opened up “seats” for Aboriginal men, women and youth living in shelters and supportive housing in Vancouver.

SNTC provides wrap-a-round supports such as an attendance incentive, start-up tools for work practicums, travel and meal assistance, personal protection equipment, and job coaching. After completing a training program in the construction industry such as – scaffolding, environmental monitoring, or piping – students participate in internships with prospective employers, which can lead to full-time employment.

“Seeing struggling individuals, who may not have been

aware of the possibilities available to them, make changes for the better, is incredibly rewarding,” says Peter Baker, Training and Development Advisor.

## Finding a new rhythm with YBEAT

YMCA's YBEAT program supports youth (between the ages of 15 and 29) who are experiencing mental health challenges as a primary barrier to employment to get the confidence, skills and experience needed to kick-start their careers.

The five-week, full-time program, includes developing a personalized work plan, skills upgrading and certification, and job readiness workshops.

Employment training is funded through the Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Skills Training, and wrap-around clinical supports are provided by Providence Health Care's Inner City Youth Program.

“YBEAT truly is a holistic program,” says Manager Dan Huang-Taylor. “Youth participants access the employment program with a goal of getting a job while also having access to a host of other services including

a clinical counselor, housing, legal or financial supports, or simply a space where they can connect with other young people.”

## Helping mothers and children Thrive

Thrive is a transformative health and life-skill building program to help single moms with young children, living in poverty, transition into full or part-time employment.

The free program is offered over four consecutive weeks and is based on a two-generation approach, with mothers and their children learning together.

While moms forge bonds with other single moms seeking to develop core life and career skills, their children learn social skills and prepare for starting school in a nearby space.

When women leave the program they leave with a plan for their future and deep, lasting friendships.

“More than half of single parents live below the poverty line, and most single parents are women,” says Darlene Gering, Advisor, Thrive Program, “They experience profound hardship on a daily basis to provide for themselves and their children. The program gives them a reprieve where they can find support from trained coaches and each other to plan for a better economic future.”

## More information:

[www.knackworks.ca](http://www.knackworks.ca)

[www.squamish.net/government/departments/service-delivery/employment-training/squamish-nation-trades-centre/](http://www.squamish.net/government/departments/service-delivery/employment-training/squamish-nation-trades-centre/)

[www.gv.ymca.ca/Programs/Employment/Youth-BEAT](http://www.gv.ymca.ca/Programs/Employment/Youth-BEAT)

[www.thrivingenerations.nationbuilder-](http://www.thrivingenerations.nationbuilder-)

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