

**Kay'shi'daay'ing - Where We Live**

**The Unexpected Emergence of Housing First**

Ten years ago, the concept of Housing First was brought to Making Kenora Home. It flew in the face of the housing readiness continuum that was commonly accepted as the organized way to deal with chronic homelessness. It was a startling concept and many of us struggled with it. Simply put, Housing First put people into affordable homes without any pre-conditions. Previously, the homeless were invited into homeless shelter, worked their way into transitional units and were allowed into permanent housing when they met program criteria. It was all charted out in a logical order but the problem was that the drop out rate was high and the most vulnerable stayed homeless. Housing programs increased supports but trying harder didn't turn the tide. Today the work of Sam Tsemberis and others, including Iain DeJong has torn up the charts and focused on the lived experience of the unsheltered to develop 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. Since the 1990's this approach has proven to be the most effective approach to addressing chronic homelessness. In 2013 Calgary's Alex Pathways to Housing reports that less than 1% of existing clients return to shelters or rough sleeping. Of particular interest to tax payers, the societal cost reduction resulting from declines in hospitalizations (66%), emergency room service (38%), EMS events (41%), incarcerations (79%) and police interactions

(30%). With these results as evidence, Making Kenora Home facilitated a 2014 community workshop with Iain DeJong that sparked local interest. Following Medicine Hat's reported success in reducing homelessness through Housing First, Dan Jorgensen went to investigate their success and brought back hope for our own community. Soon after our executive teleconferenced with Sam Tsemberis to review how Housing First could benefit Kenora. Although the lack of available housing units has stalled the ability of local service providers to create a local Housing First network, we now know the direction we must take for effective intervention. Ultimately the change remains in the hands of Kenora-we need to recognize that action needs to be taken for the benefit of the entire community. There can no longer be US and Them because every action or non-action impacts us all.

**Care for all of Kenora!**

**Housing First Principles**

**Housing**-Immediate Access to housing with no readiness conditions

**Choice**-Consumer choice and self-determination

**Recover**-Recovery Orientation

**Support**-Individualized and person driven supports

**Community**-Social and community integration



*Jennifer McKibbin, Co-Chair*

*Diane Pelletier, Co-Chair*

*Nan Normand, Secretary*

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## Local Housing Projects Progress

Sometimes we are so busy focusing on needs that we forget to celebrate the progress made. Here are our local good news stories:

1. Habitat for Humanity is nearing completion of its third family home build in Kenora.
2. Kenora's fulltime emergency shelter is now in operation. The great news is how the community has woked together to fill the temporary services gap.
3. After years of struggling to meet the needs of those in the community on bail bonds, KDSB and the Ne-Chee Centre have taken over operation of the Northland and will be constructing supportive housing that better meets the needs of this population. This is another example of community collaboration to enhance local services.
4. FIMUR has partnered with KDSB to develop another 20 unit supported living facility to meet the needs of the chronically unsheltered in Kenora.
5. City of Kenora has held two housing forums (November 28 and February 21) and is following up with concrete actions to support the development of affordable housing locally.

Good news carries a responsibility for the citizens of Kenora-if we do not welcome these opportunities into our neighbourhoods, we risk the loss of funding. Be aware.



## Week of Action Against Poverty

Music, charity challenges, red ribbons, blogging, presentations, music, free swims, fundraisers and workshops all showcased the heart of Kenora. The city proclaimed the event for February 10-16. Public events included the Musical Celebration which showcased local anti-poverty



programs and the free swim that was hosted by the Rotarians. Members of our educational system stepped up to volunteer for the annual Walk In Others Shoes participation. The 11 bloggers elicited 3000 hits in within 5 days. The latest Homeless in Kenora booklet (Stumbling Into Homelessness) shared the lived experience of unexpectedness homelessness. The winner of the Workplace Challenge was Copperfin Credit Union. Both Treaty 3 Governance and the Northwestern Health Unit nipped at the community champion's heels with their own spirited giving activities followed by Kenora Dental Professionals and LAO/NWCLC. The full report on WAAP 2019 can be accessed on our website.



## Social Enterprise

Following up on last years social enterprise workshop that had been organized by Making Kenora Home, the municipality facilitated a full day event featuring social entrepreneurs who are turning business models into social solutions. Presenters from SEE, AKI Foods, LOW Brewing and other enterprises shared their expertise at the March 7 event.

For more information call Nan at 807-468-8888

[www.makingkenorahome.ca](http://www.makingkenorahome.ca) (web site)

[Making Kenora Home](#) (facebook community)

## What is Making Kenora HOME?

*A concerned group working on solutions for homelessness in our community.*

### Guiding Principles

- ❖ **EQUALITY:** *We are all created equal within this world that we share*
- ❖ **INCLUSION:** *Every person living in Kenora is a part of our community*
- ❖ **SHARING:** *As a community we must care for each other*
- ❖ **SELF DETERMINATION:** *Each person has the right to choose his or her own path providing that path does not hurt another*
- ❖ **EMPOWERMENT:** *We are accountable for our own actions and need to look inward first*