

Annual General Meeting

June 25, 2025

### **Message from the Executive Director**

Hello Everyone,

My name is Courtney Helfrich, and I am Executive Director with True North Society. It is my pleasure to provide thoughts on the past year as the leader of True North Society. It is a privilege to work with this incredible organization and Board of Directors, as well as our leadership team and staff to achieve our strategic goals annually and support vulnerable people in their healing journey. We continue to seek new and innovative ways to empower those affected by domestic violence, to create a safe environment for all.

Connection, Compassion, Courage, Empowerment and Integrity are the values that drive how we show up, how we support, and how we engage with our community. This past year, while leaning on our values to help guides us, we had many accomplishments and achieved many of our strategic goals - Not without trials and tribulations, but we continued to show up, even when it was hard, and did so with courage, compassion, connection, empowerment, and integrity. What a year it has been, and we are so grateful to have you all here this evening to share with you the impacts and the achievements.

### **PEOPLE**

- True North values our employees and wants to ensure that every voice is heard. As we launched our annual Employee engagement survey with very positive results and feedback, we were able to launch our very first ever Employee recognition program.
- To help create more consistency and stability, we completed the review of our internal processes and procedures for recruitment, onboarding and orientation. As we work towards streamlining our HR practices, we know how this supports longer-term staff retention and satisfaction.
- We continue to work with CUPE Local 4731 to achieve our first collective agreement.
- Our Workplace Health and Safety committee was extremely active this year working to keep us safe! We held our very first annual Staff Safety and Appreciation Day and are looking forward to the years to come.
- We worked closely with our community partners to develop closer working relationships – This year we signed our first MOU with Trellis and we continue to work together on various cooking groups, Teen Drop-in programs and the further development of Kickstand programming.
- Our partnership and knowledge sharing with Siksika Nation and the Siksika Support Centre continues to be enhanced. Through our MOU we work in partnership together to support people from Siksika who are fleeing violence. This has been an incredible partnership. We are very grateful for our Siksika friends and neighbours and our ability to work together to address and prevent domestic violence in new and innovative ways. This partnership has shared so much with our team and families, including ribbon skirt making activities, beading, as well as many new resources and knowledge of healing practices.
- Our own Indigenous Liaison role came to an end this year, as it was a term grant ending in March. Through this grant we were able to offer clients access to elders onsite and trips to

Blackfoot Crossing Historical Site to enhance our knowledge and understanding of our history and Truth and Reconciliation.

- We established new partnerships with Old Sun Community College as well as Bow Valley College to create opportunity for further education and internship.

#### CLIENTS/SERVICE

- Having our clinical supports onsite for our clients has been instrumental to our client's well-being. We piloted a program this year to have group sessions completed in-shelter a few times a week, with a mix of both outreach clients and in-shelter clients attending. Re-structuring group this way and allowing for more innovation has been so helpful to our client's healing journey.
- We were able to secure offsite locations for Outreach services to allow for more confidentiality of our current building and decrease of barriers. These were re-established in Drumheller and Threehills.
- As you previously heard, we were able to complete our Social needs assessment this year and will work to incorporate the results of this into our program planning and future strategic goals.
- We continue to explore opportunities for children to attend school while in shelter and we are proud to share that we are currently piloting a program to support children with education and routine in shelter. More to come next year.

#### QUALITY

- We continue to work to ensure ease of access and navigation to our website. Our most recent analytics report was very positive with lots of engagement.
- We completed the grant this past year to support with going digital. With the help of ACWS, we are seeking to move over to a new database designed to support with enhanced data collection. With this will come the opportunity to go completely paperless.
- Our staff have had the opportunity train as a trainer for Non-Violent Crisis Intervention to train our staff onsite. This is an incredibly well recognized and highly credible certification and is best practice for all staff to obtain across the shelter sector.
- We have engaged experts and consultants to support with brand and communications strategy to support True North with the continued momentum of our new brand, as well as to continue to build more relationships in our community and with stakeholders. This has allowed us to build and secure our donor portfolio to ensure the sustainability and growth of True North as well as positive community relationships and further awareness of True North as an expert resource in addressing and preventing domestic violence.

#### GROWTH

- In 2019, we developed a business plan as a case for support for second stage and transitional housing. In 2021, we developed our 5-year strategic plan and identified longer-term supports for housing for individuals fleeing domestic violence as a priority. In 2022, we purchased land in Strathmore to build affordable housing for those fleeing violence with our own internal restricted funds. In 2024, we completed the design for this affordable housing project. Now, in 2025, we have applied for various funding sources to help us achieve our goals and await the outcome. We are hopeful to be successful and announce this soon, so we can move forward with the project and support more people and their children and truly break the cycle of violence.

- We have many plans for various fundraising events and awareness campaigns in the community this year to continue our momentum of our rebrand and awareness of True North.

We know people are struggling. With the housing crisis, cost of living, and inflation, we want to be part of the solution. We will keep pushing forward, building momentum, and advocating for our project, until it is standing tall; ready to support more people who have been affected by trauma and domestic violence in re-building their lives because:

*Together we walk the path with those in crisis, honouring the past, providing support in the present and awakening hope for the future.*

We look forward to seeing what we can achieve together this next year! Thank you for your continued belief in us as experts in the work we do. We truly could not do it without our partners, stakeholders and community.

Thank you.

Courtney Helfrich  
True North Society  
Executive Director

