



Phoenix

At Phoenix, we acknowledge that it is a privilege to live and work in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq People. We confirm our commitment to respectfully walk in friendship. We are all treaty people, and we must consider how we can act today to advance the progress of truth and reconciliation.

Nova Scotia has over 50 historic African Nova Scotian communities with a long, deep, and complex history dating back over 400 years. We recognize and celebrate the culture, legacy, achievements, and contributions of people of African descent – past and present.

Since 1987, Phoenix has been dedicated to supporting youth and contributing to a vibrant community. Phoenix's locations in Halifax/K'jipuktuk provide a continuum of care for youth ages 11-24 and their families. We offer important services and programs including shelter, food, housing support, health care, parenting support, recreation, education, and employment services, and clinical therapy. Our team of caring professionals recognize that each person who comes to us has individual needs as well as strengths. People are leaders in their own lives; Phoenix is a leader in supporting them.

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Staff created this mural at Phoenix Learning and Employment Centre in recognition of African Heritage Month 2023 - Seas of Struggle. The display highlights the work of African Nova Scotian community leaders and honours historic African Nova Scotian communities across the province.

A Year of Celebrating Community

Phoenix has grown to offer a wide range of services, including: advocacy, youth outreach, community engagement, housing support, youth and family therapy, arts, recreation, leadership, health services, parent support, money management, crisis support, education support, and employment counselling. We understand the importance of wraparound supports in relation to a youth and their family's ability to thrive. Our programs and services staff work in collaboration with one another, connecting youth and families to the resources they need.

While the past fiscal year has presented challenges, many without easy solutions, Phoenix continues to put youth and families first, take their lead, and walk beside them in their journeys to thrive.

A total of 795 youth across multiple programs were served.

270 – Phoenix Centre for Youth (PCFY)

115 – Phoenix Youth and Community Centre (PYCC)

38 – Youth Outreach Program (YOP)

66 – Phoenix Youth and Family Therapy (PYFT)

69 – Phoenix Learning and Employment Centre (PLEC)

70 – Learn and Explore at Phoenix (LEAP)

138 – Phoenix Youth Shelter (PYS)

10 – Phoenix Homes for Independence (PHI)

19 – Phoenix House (PH)



"I love how supportive staff are, which makes me feel comfortable being the best me!"



Home Away from Home



A Conversation with Bai and Darren



Bai came to Canada as a refugee from The Gambia when he was just 19 years old. He had no connections to the community nor any family or friends. Fortunately, he connected with Phoenix Youth Shelter early on, and now lives at Phoenix Homes for Independence (PHI).

Darren, who has over 30 years' experience working with Phoenix, recently stepped into his new role as manager of PHI. He and his team support up to 10 youth living across 3 homes.

On a beautiful June day, Darren meets up with Bai to talk about Bai's journey with Phoenix.

Tell us about your journey that brought you to Phoenix.

Bai: I came to Canada in 2019 and got connected with the Halifax Refugee Clinic. I was homeless, so the clinic brought me to Phoenix. I lived [at the shelter] for almost six months, and later moved to PHI.

Darren: Why did you pick Halifax?

B: I used to hear a lot about Nova Scotia, especially Halifax, on the internet. I knew I wanted to be in Canada, so I did a lot of research. I heard that the people were very nice...so I felt Halifax would be a good destination for me. Halifax is also very common in The Gambia. A lot of Gambians who...started their schooling at the University of The Gambia completed at St. Mary's University.

What does Phoenix mean to you?

Bai: I came here...with no family...so Phoenix became my family. I was so traumatized when I first came here. The first day I was at Phoenix I had a very warm welcome. At one point I was really missing my mom and my home, but Meaghan (PHI Team Lead), and my key worker Cheralyn, really helped. The love they showed me really helped with my mental health. It was my first time travelling; I had never left my home country before.

Darren: You never left [The Gambia] until you came to Canada?

B: Yes, everything was new to me. Phoenix helped me to adapt to the system, they connected me with the Muslim community, which is really important to me. (Bai pauses to reflect.)

B: I mean...(smiles), I could spend the whole day talking about [what Phoenix means to me]. I'm really grateful. I got connected with Phoenix Learning and Employment Centre and got back into school, which was really important to me. I also have a stable home, people I get to see and call family. Phoenix is just like a family to me.



D: It's nice to hear you say all of that. For me, as a someone who works at Phoenix, it's about recognizing that tomorrow can be better. For that to happen, people need support. People need people around them that believe in them and can help them navigate life's obstacles. So if we can help your tomorrow be better, that's what's meaningful for me.

What does community and belonging mean to you?

Bai: Community is something that brings people together. For example, through soccer, I met a lot of people of different nationalities, cultures, faiths, and what brings us all together is a love for soccer. I also met a lot of people through volunteering, and at the mosque where I met a lot of people from different cultures and backgrounds, but our faith is what brings us together. Even through Phoenix, you meet people who you love, people that really see you, and make you feel at home. I've met people who I call my brothers and my sisters, and we are like a family.

What excites you now, and what are you looking forward to?

Bai: Right now, I'm really looking forward to visiting my mom. It's been three years since I have seen her and my younger sister so I'm very excited that in a few days I'll be on a plane to visit them.

Darren: Wonderful.

B: And another thing I am looking forward to is starting school in September.

D: What are you going to be studying?

B: I'll be taking medical sciences at Dalhousie University. My goal is to become a doctor, so I'll be applying to medical school after completing my Bachelor of Science degree. I'm really passionate about becoming a doctor, so I can help save lives one day.

D: We wish you all of the luck in the world.

B: Thank you so much. I feel so lucky to be a Phoenix youth. When I first came here I had so many things on my mind and no direction. Phoenix really helped me to get back on track...and gave me the chance to pursue my career goals so I can help others one day. Phoenix helps many other youth, and really makes the world a better place. Thank you for everything.



"Phoenix is just like a family to me."

Celebrating Together Again

Phoenix Homes for Independence

Moving out on their own is a pivotal moment in any young person's life. With that first apartment comes a series of quickly learned life lessons: budgeting for groceries, navigating conflict with roommates, and understanding the fine art of folding a fitted sheet.

Although the journeys that led each of the youth living at Phoenix Homes for Independence (PHI) are unique, in many ways they share this universal experience. PHI consists of three homes, each with a live-in support worker, where youth engage in programming, develop independent living skills, and build their self-confidence.

"At PHI, there is formal programming, and there's informal programming," says PHI Manager Darren. "Formal programs are...intentional and planned, and a lot of those ideas come directly from the youth."

With the easing of COVID restrictions, 2022 provided staff and youth at PHI with incredible opportunities to reconnect in larger groups to learn those life skills, while building supportive relationships, celebrating diversity, and sharing moments of joy.

African Heritage Month

With support from staff, youth planned an event to celebrate African Heritage Month. Activities included making bracelets, preparing meals inspired by African cuisine, and creating a collaborative art piece. Moments of magic also appeared throughout the evening. "At one point, someone suggested listening to music," says PHI Team Lead Meaghan. "People were sharing different songs from their cultures, there was dancing and a lot of joy, but then we listened to one song that speaks about racism and injustice. So as joyful as it was, there was a lot to talk about. People were sharing and learning from one another, and it was just...really beautiful."



OnTree Adventure

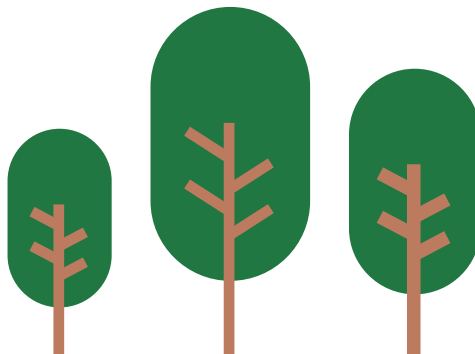
PHI staff and youth from all three homes participated in a full day of high-ropes courses at OnTree Adventure Park. "This was the first time many of the youth had met one another," explains Darren. "The amount of people encouraging each other was amazing. They were coaching each other through obstacles, overcoming fears, telling each other 'you got this.' It was incredible." Throughout the day, staff witnessed moments of problem solving, teamwork, and personal growth – skills that are all transferrable to living independently.

Giving Day

Staff and youth from each house brainstormed different ways to recognize Giving Day and show love to their community. One house decided they wanted to make cookies for Soul's Harbour, so the youth found a recipe, bought the ingredients, and baked several batches. "They put them in these cute little heart bags, and we dropped them off to Soul's Harbour to be handed out with a meal," says Meaghan. "It was a way for them to say, 'we're thinking about you. You are loved.'"

The Live-in Impact

"Informal programming is the skill development that happens day-to-day, like cooking, cleaning, and learning the importance of routine and time management," says Darren. "It often comes from conversations with the live-in staff." Our live-in support staff are instrumental to the success of the program, having to balance responsibilities as a roommate, a role model, and a staff person – no easy feat. "They always have to be on. In a lot of ways, they are like the heartbeat of PHI."



Program Highlights

For everyone at Phoenix, this was a year of reconnecting with one another, taking time to learn and reflect, and creating space for moments of celebration. Check out what some of our community and residential programs have been up to!

A Little Taste of MGP

Phoenix Youth and Community Centre partnered with Mulgrave Park's Caring & Learning Centre to host "A Little Taste of MGP," a celebration of culture and food. Community residents prepared more than 12 traditional dishes from around the world. In addition to delicious meals, the event also provided an opportunity for enhancing cultural awareness and understanding, while strengthening community connections.

Fundraiser for Ukraine

When Youth Outreach Program staff asked the youth for program ideas, one young person suggested a fundraiser for those who have been impacted by the war in Ukraine. Originally from Ukraine, this individual has family members who still live there and have experienced the effects of the war first-hand. The group made and sold buttons and crafts, raising \$492.50 for UNICEF's efforts in providing safe water, medical aid, and healthcare services. We are inspired by the youth's dedication to raising awareness and helping those in need!



STEP Grads of 2022/23

This year, 15 youth participants graduated from the Skills, Training, and Employment at Phoenix (STEP) Program. Throughout the five-week training course, youth explored careers, developed new skills, and built long-lasting connections with their peers. After graduation, participants put their new skills to use during work placements in a variety of fields, such as digital marketing, building maintenance, animal care, hospitality, and more! Congrats STEP Grads of 2022/23!



The STEP Program is Funded by the Government of Canada's Youth Employment and Skills Strategy Program

Transgender Day of Remembrance

Staff and youth at Phoenix Youth Shelter created a display to recognize Transgender Day of Remembrance. The intent was to express hope, while holding space for the grief and reality the day represents. The display fostered reflection and awareness, staying in the dining room for months and garnering attention from guests and community partners. Youth-led projects like this provide room for valuable learning, while encouraging youth ownership over the space to reflect their diversity and our values as a shelter community.

The Pride Bird

With the theme of “fabric” as their guide, LEAP and the Phoenix Youth Pride team got creative for the 2022 Pride Parade. Staff, youth, and volunteers re-purposed unusable donations to create a stunning art piece. Many helping hands spent over 120 hours cutting, sorting, and tying fabric to create a Pride-themed Phoenix bird. This art piece was a key part of the Phoenix Pride float, which earned us the award for Best Not-for-Profit float!



Support for Young Parents

Rising costs due to inflation make it difficult for youth and families to support their basic needs. With support from our Parent Support Case Manager, we continued to focus on providing essentials such as diapers and baby food to young parents; linking families to community supports; daycare subsidy navigation; and liaising with child welfare. Additionally, with community donations, staff set up a “Holiday Workshop” at the centre. Here, young parents could browse a selection of new toys, children’s clothing, and other gift items, helping to reduce the stress of making ends meet during the holidays. From staff and youth at Phoenix, thank you to our holiday donors who make this support possible.





Community and Belonging

A Conversation with Armon and Carla

Armon has been involved with Phoenix Youth and Community Centre (PYCC) in Mulgrave Park since he was 12. He has gone to PYCC for tutoring, coaching, and summer programming, and has made many long-lasting connections along the way. Nowadays, Armon keeps busy studying law and serving part-time in the Canadian Army Reserves, but he still finds time to connect with his community.

Originally from Gander, Newfoundland, Carla came to Nova Scotia in 2002 to study criminology at Saint Mary's University, fell in love with Halifax, and decided to stay. She has spent the last eight years at Phoenix as a community outreach worker with PYCC.

Earlier this summer, Armon and Carla got together to reflect on the journeys that brought them to Phoenix, and what the future holds.

Tell us about your journey that brought you to Phoenix.

Armon: I don't remember how young I was, I just remember all of the older kids getting to go [to PYCC], and I used to think, "why can't I go there?" (laughs) But I remember when you guys came to Highland Park and at that point I was old enough, so I started going.

Carla: I remember when I started, you were in grade 7.

A: Yeah, I was always like, "what are they doing over there?" I just always wanted to go.

C: When I think about my journey to Phoenix... I spent some time working [at different] community-focused non-profit organizations, when I saw the posting for this position. I kept hearing about Mulgrave Park, but I didn't really know anything about the community until I started researching the job, and then I was like, oh wow, okay, this is definitely where I want to go and work. So, I applied for the outreach worker position, and I've been here for eight years. It's wild.

What does Phoenix mean to you?

Armon: Phoenix is like a family because everyone's always there for each other, which is what I love and why I keep coming back. It's also a safe space. You can always find somebody if you need something.

Carla: I was thinking about this the other day. This role is what brought me into the community of Mulgrave Park, and I've learned so much from being down here ... and meeting everybody and the youth and adults. You get to build lots of connections.

What does community and belonging mean to you?

Armon: One of my favourite quotes is "It takes a village," and community is that village. I find it so important to be around people with similar experiences, different experiences, older, younger...everything comes together in a way that is beneficial for everyone. (Pauses) It's funny because of all places I've lived, I lived here for the shortest amount of time.



Carla: But yet...you're a community member.

A: Yeah. I'll always come back. This is home.

C: There's such a sense of pride that comes with being connected to Mulgrave Park. I'm very proud of my position here and what the community brings and what it means to me.

A: Definitely.

C: You know, in my role I get to see people grow into themselves and figure out who they are. And seeing you from when you were in grade 7 to now studying at university...it's been awesome.

What excites you now, and what are you looking forward to?

Armon: I'm really enjoying the military course I'm in. I'm learning a lot about myself, pushing myself past limits and doing things I never thought I would be able to do. And I'm looking forward to going back to school. I think I'll have fun this year in classes, which is nice because I do enjoy learning, especially law or philosophy or politics.

Carla: Do you feel that now you're in your second year, you're on the right path?

A: Yeah. That first year...was a huge jump and took a lot to adjust to. But by second semester, I found my groove. Now that I know what I want to do, I'm looking forward to finishing that degree.

C: Where do you see yourself in five years?

A: Hopefully, second year of law school, and still in the reserves. Maybe master corporal by then.

C: And what are you right now?

A: A private. I'm hoping to get there and do my leadership courses.

C: When you finish law school, and if you're still in the army, what happens then?

A: I want to be a military lawyer, or a legal officer ...I could deploy around the world learning new laws, which I love. To be in other countries...and see how the way of life is. I think that would be pretty cool.



"Everyone's always there for each other, which is what I love and why I keep coming back."

Tree of Life

Phoenix Youth and Family Therapy

It can be a daunting experience when youth arrive for their first appointment at Phoenix Youth and Family Therapy (PYFT).

"It's natural for clients to feel shy or nervous at first," says Clinical Therapist Amber. "That's why it's so important to take the time and really develop that foundation of trust."

PYFT provides free individual and family/caregiver therapy, and accepts referrals for youth in grades 6 to 12, as well as youth up to age 25 who are connected to Phoenix through other programs. Services emphasize the importance of early intervention and are informed by a range of therapeutic approaches and techniques, including anti-oppressive practice, cultural responsiveness, acceptance and commitment therapy, and narrative therapy.

Amber, who is originally from Halifax, has worked in child and adolescent mental health on a local and international scale. Her passion for advocacy and social justice drew her to join the Phoenix team in 2022.

"Phoenix is so aligned with my personal and professional values. Even the fact that we talk about values in a very intentional way lets me know that this is where I need to be," says Amber.

When designing services that are truly youth-centred, careful consideration is given to physical environments. While the term "clinical" may conjure images of sterile, uninviting spaces, the feeling one gets upon entering the PYFT space couldn't be more different. With tons of plants and natural light, cozy living room furniture, a kitchenette stocked with juice and snacks, and a variety of fidget toys for clients to use, the message is clear: this is a safe space for youth to open up and be themselves.

The team at PYFT helps clients work through a variety of difficult topics including family relationships, grief and loss, bullying, histories of trauma and/or abuse, mental health difficulties, poverty, and discrimination. Staff create an individualized approach for each client, considering their unique contexts, strengths, and interests, and what approaches best meet their needs.



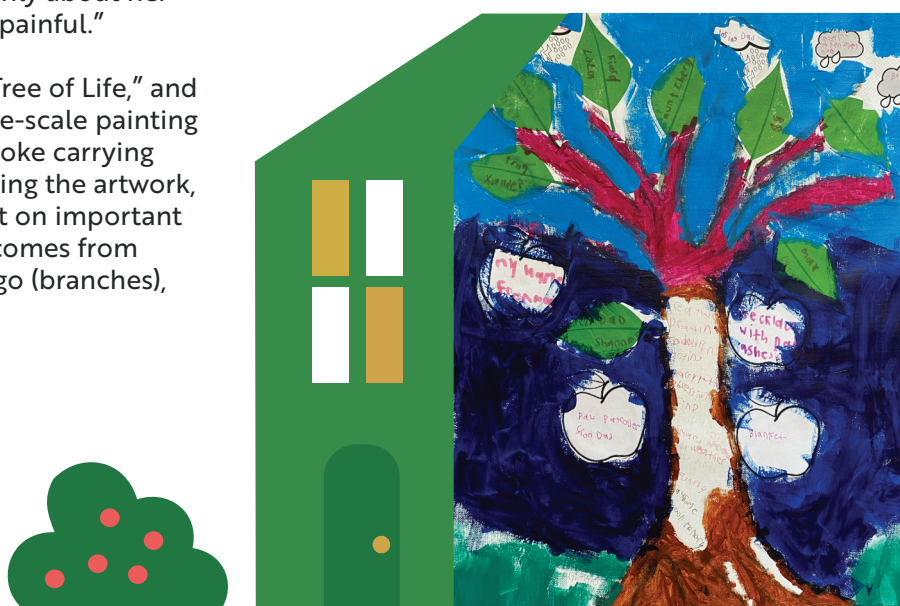
"I try to incorporate get-to-know-you games when I first meet with clients, especially younger ones," says Amber, "and I always try to have art supplies on hand, too. It can be a funny sight after an appointment when there's paint and glitter and stickers all over my office, but I understand how powerful it can be for youth to find their voice through writing, poetry, or any means of art. To turn something that is not so beautiful into something beautiful—that makes an impact and moves people."

A young person, age 11, had been meeting with Amber to work on processing the grief of her father's passing, as well as the impacts of being in and out of foster care, coping with learning disabilities, and bullying. "She was experiencing feelings of uncertainty and displacement, but had trouble putting words to her emotions," explains Amber. "I wanted to give her something tangible that could reinforce her connections and her roots and sense of belonging, in a time when she was feeling untethered." After developing the young person's trust, Amber was quick to identify a narrative therapy exercise that would help. "She is really quite creative, and I figured an arts-based approach could provide a pathway into her being able to talk more openly about her feelings and things that are painful."

The exercise is called "The Tree of Life," and the result is a beautiful, large-scale painting of a tree, with each brushstroke carrying special significance. In creating the artwork, the client was able to reflect on important people (leaves), where she comes from (roots), where she wants to go (branches),

her talents and skills (trunk), the challenges (rainclouds) she's overcome, and the gifts (apples) she has been given. As the youth inspected each leaf on her masterpiece, she turned to Amber and said, "I've realized I have so many important people in my life now who love me, even if they are not here." After asking her father's friends and relatives about his life, she found out that her dad often spoke up for those who were excluded by others. She excitedly told Amber, "That is just like me, I always stand up for others too! That's my apple I got from my Dad!" Now she knows that this character strength is how she carries her father with her, and that gives her the courage to move forward.

"She brought that up, not me," says Amber. "She was able to make these really beautiful links to feel connected to her dad and who he is, and the person she wants to be." Through this creative approach, Amber was able to help create a safe space to have open conversations and process emotions and loss, where previously it was too overwhelming. Through art, the youth was able to construct a narrative that took her from despair and loneliness to honouring her loss and making space for healing and hope.



Turning Visions Into Reality

Youth continue to face a growing list of challenges as they navigate the world around them. We are witnessing the unavailability of safe, affordable, and dignified housing; poverty and rising inflation; lack of access to mental health supports; and stigma, violence, and trauma due to racism and discrimination.

But there is hope. At Phoenix, there is always hope because we are guided by the voices of those we serve. We listen and respond directly to their immediate needs, and work toward long-term strategies that will work systemically to address the barriers that exist for them.

Access to Food

Phoenix Centre for Youth continued to offer outreach visits to youth and families, and simultaneously experienced an increasing number of drop-in visits due to loosening COVID-19 restrictions. Thanks to our generous partners at Feed Nova Scotia, youth can obtain food at no cost, either through delivery of emergency food boxes, or direct access to grocery items at the centre. Some youth told us they are unsure what to make with limited ingredients, so Learn and Explore at Phoenix launched the “Let’s Talk About Food” Program where staff and youth gather weekly to share a meal. Participants in the program discuss topics such as how to prepare the meal, the cultural significance of the food, how to save money, and how to make substitutions to accommodate dietary needs. After attending the program, youth received a gift card to purchase the ingredients and recreate the meal at home.

Supporting Mental Health

With funding generously provided by our partners at Medavie Foundation, this year we welcomed Catherine, a new mental health clinician who provides counselling at Phoenix Centre for Youth and through Phoenix’s residential programs. This support is youth-directed, flexible and responsive, does not require a referral, and is free. When needed, Catherine connects with the Phoenix Youth and Family Therapy team, the IWK Health nurse who works full-time with Phoenix, or with a general practitioner who regularly works with youth connected to Phoenix. Layering in other Phoenix supports is a true wrap-around approach to mental health support.

Creative Housing Opportunity

Our housing options for youth continue to grow. This year, we added a one-bedroom condo to our scattered-site housing approach. Donors Dorothy and John generously and creatively donated the use of their condo to Phoenix for three years. This gift is steeped in thought and inspiration as well as impact: It was donated in memory of Dorothy’s former husband, Patrick, and has been appointed as a healing arts space. With access to dignified and affordable housing, and Phoenix wrap-around supports, the youth residing in this space can now focus on their personal aspirations.



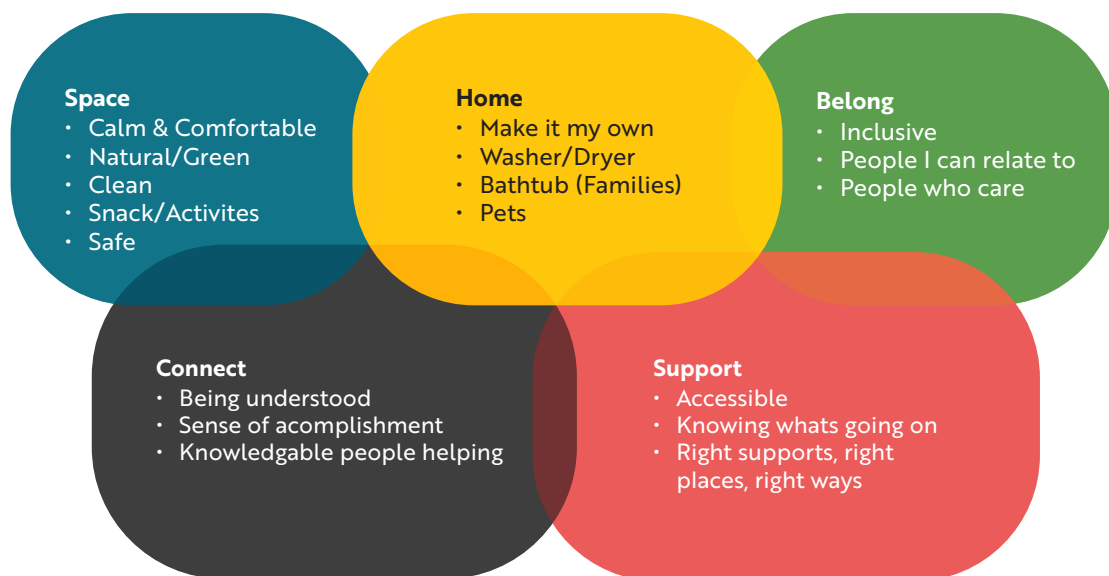
The Bigger Picture

While staff at Phoenix work with youth every day to address their immediate needs, we are, at the same time, looking to the future, with the goal of building a solution that is integrated, collaborative, wraps around youth, and belongs to the community. We envision a multi-service housing centre for youth: A place that brings together partnerships and includes spaces for programming, employment services, dignified and affordable housing, health services, and much more.

This year, thanks to funding provided by the Community Housing Transformation Centre, a comprehensive feasibility study was completed with support and expertise from Nycum + Associates. Consultations that were part of this work illustrate without a doubt that youth want a one-stop shop where they can receive dignified, collaborative supports from Phoenix and other service providers. They have some amazing ideas that we can't wait to bring to life!

Over the next year we will increase our engagements with youth, staff, community partners and government. We will secure land, and launch a capital campaign that will help us turn our vision into reality. So much more to come – we invite you to come along with us!

Dignity



Core themes that arose from our consultation sessions with youth.

Community Partnership with Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre

Phoenix believes deeply in the value of partnerships and the important role learning plays in our social justice journey. So when Phoenix was approached by Trena Empringham and the Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre to join the Halifax Coalition for Indigenous Peoples in 2021, we leapt at the opportunity. For the last two years, we have participated on the coalition and on its subcommittees addressing issues surrounding housing, education, employment, and mental health.

"The Coalition is proud to have Phoenix Youth Programs as a member," says Trena, "and we look forward to not only working together to continue to build the relationship, but to maintaining this connection for many years to come through committed reconciliACTION."

This year provided us with several opportunities to deepen our connection with the Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre. For example, Phoenix made a contribution from our staff fund and sent a group of volunteers to support the setup of this year's Mawita'jik. Others are highlighted below.

L'nu Language Workshop Series

The recognition and preservation of Indigenous languages is listed in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action. As a member of the coalition, Phoenix was invited to participate in an exciting Mi'kmaw language learning opportunity. The series was facilitated by Rose Meuse from Bear River First Nation who has written several Mi'kmaw books and has been teaching L'nu language for over 20 years. This was a wonderful experience that staff thoroughly enjoyed; Wela'lin, Rose!

Blanket Exercise

Several Phoenix staff have participated in the Kairos Blanket exercise. This year, our board members and trustees participated in a blanket exercise offered through Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre. The program was created in response to the 1996 report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples and provides participants with an interactive teaching on the history of Indigenous peoples in Canada, from an Indigenous perspective. The facilitator discusses themes of genocide, loss of land, and relocation, and concludes with group conversations where participants share what they have learned. This was truly an eye-opening experience and has left a profound impact on those who attended.

Dreamcatcher Workshop

Phoenix staff participated in an interactive workshop facilitated by Elder Deb, Theresa Meuse, and Denise John, where we had the opportunity to learn about the large dream catcher installed at Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre in memory of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Gender-diverse People. While listening to the teaching of the dreamcatcher, Phoenix coalition members contributed to the large-scale installation by making some small dreamcatchers to be added to the large dreamcatcher. The small pieces represent approximately 4,000 women, girls, and gender-diverse people whose dreams were cut short by race-based violence. Staff were honoured to be able to contribute to this important installation.



On display in the Joan Glode Room at Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre, this large-scale installation is a visual representation of the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Gender-diverse People across Canada.

Looking Ahead

Phoenix is an agency rooted in social justice, and we understand that it is imperative we engage in critical reflection, ongoing learning, and a commitment to decolonization at all levels of the organization. We are beyond grateful for this incredible connection with our friends at the Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre, and we are looking forward to another year of learning, unlearning, and strengthening our partnership!

Wela'lioq!



"The Halifax Coalition for Indigenous Peoples is committed to the development of strategic partnerships with organizations like Phoenix Youth Programs. These strategic partnerships are examples of how we can work together to build long-term solutions to help make Kijipuktuk a place where Indigenous people are valued, respected, supported and experience a sense of belonging."

- Trena Empringham, MNFC

Volunteer Spotlight

Doug has known about Phoenix Youth Programs for quite some time. "My wife and I have been donors for many years, and in my own line of work I've seen youth who have really benefited from accessing supports at Phoenix," says Doug. So, as his own kids grew older and he found himself with more time on his hands, he asked if he could volunteer at Phoenix Centre for Youth (PCFY). "They said, 'Can you make lunches?' " Doug laughs, "to which I replied, 'Well, I'm not so sure I'd be good at that, but what else can I do?' And so, I started organizing the donation room."

When youth come to PCFY, they know they will be able to access basic needs like food, hygiene products, and clothing – all at no cost. Donations come in all shapes and sizes, and Doug takes the time to sort through it all, ensuring items are readily accessible and easy to find. "When Doug has been in space, you can tell," says PCFY Program Manager Andy. "He always offers to help with anything that needs to be done."

Roughly 20 – 30 youth access supports at PCFY each day. Between answering the door, delivering food boxes, attending appointments, liaising with landlords, and managing crises, it can be challenging for staff to find the time to sort through donations. "I know how someone could think that it's not the most important task, but the impact is huge," says Andy.



For Doug, it's not just about keeping the space organized. "It's really about creating a dignified shopping experience." When youth enter the donation room, they don't have to worry about looking for a missing shoe, digging through bins, or having to accept items that are dirty or torn. Instead, they can easily find quality new or gently used clothing according to size, season, and style. Sometimes it even comes with a dash of customer service.

"One day, there was a young woman going through the items [looking for] a coat," says Doug. "I had just been in there for an hour; I knew where everything was, so we started going through the coats together. I was handing them to her, you know, try this one, try that one, and I held one up and said 'Hmm, I don't think this is your colour, let's keep looking,' " Doug laughs. "I guess she found that really funny, and she eventually found one she liked. I was happy to help in that moment."

This story is one of many that illustrate the importance of access to basic needs, and sometimes, it's things that you may not think about that are always in demand," explains Andy. "New underwear, towels, bottled water...and can openers! We can't get enough can openers," she laughs. "Then there's things like bus tickets, gift cards, unlocked cellphones... things that really help connect youth with resources."

With the help of our amazing volunteers, Phoenix continues to support youth as they navigate challenges in unpredictable times. "The nice thing about volunteering with Phoenix, you can be part of something that's long-standing and has deep roots in the community," says Doug. "The staff are so committed to their work, and you can tell the youth feel comfortable there. There's a huge sense of dignity and trust."

The Fruit Lady

Finding the perfect way to mark a milestone or celebrate someone special can be challenging. The decision to give in memory or in tribute of a loved one can be a meaningful way to highlight that special person or moment, while also creating positive changes for others. One such continuing donation originated from a person whose spirit and generosity has lived on through generations of Phoenix House residents and staff – a dedicated volunteer who later became affectionately known as the Fruit Lady.

Beginning in a volunteer role more than 30 years ago, working directly with youth providing mentorship, the Fruit Lady wondered if there was more that she could do. The staff at Phoenix House suggested that an occasional gift of fruit would always be welcome. As a mother of three sons, the Fruit Lady immediately understood the endless need for nutritious snacks. Throughout her time with Phoenix, the occasional gift of fruit grew into substantial weekly fruit deliveries to Phoenix House that she graciously included as supplements to her own family shopping. Understanding that special treats helped celebrate important holidays, the Fruit Lady also liked to include seasonal goodies for occasions such as Christmas and Easter.



In preparation for a special event in 1997, youth were asked who should be invited as guest speakers. Without hesitation, the Fruit Lady was unanimously recommended. While she was startled to be featured among the other prominent speakers, what really caught her by surprise was learning that what she regarded as small, regular acts of kindness were considered so significant that the youth and staff had bestowed the nickname “The Fruit Lady” upon her. After retiring to the South Shore, the Fruit Lady continued to deliver her healthy offerings whenever possible until her passing in 2020.

For over 30 years, the Fruit Lady didn't simply offer snacks for youth at Phoenix House, she also showed them that their community cared and was there to support them. To this day, that legacy of caring continues as the Fruit Lady's husband supports Phoenix with donations in memory of his wife of over 50 years.

Thank you again to Phoenix's very own Fruit Lady and her family for years of devoted community care and support.



Phoenix House staff Marsha and Ian prepare a beautiful selection of fresh fruit.

2022 Phoenix Holiday Luncheon

Presented by RBC Wealth Management Dominion Securities, the Phoenix Holiday Luncheon was a remarkable event that allowed the community to come together in person, underlining the value of human connection, networking, and the joy of being in the same room with friends, both new and old. This year, in an effort to create a more inclusive space, we introduced a 'pay what you will' option for tickets.

Elder Deb of the Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre set the tone with a beautiful prayer and teaching; Nykeala shared an incredible speech about her journey at Phoenix; and Morgan Toney and Keith Mullins gave a powerful performance about the importance of storytelling. With over 700 in attendance, this year's event was one to remember!

Opening Doors to Opportunities

Excerpts from Nykeala's Speech

"My Phoenix story begins in 2010 when Phoenix was invited into Mulgrave Park. I was actually skeptical at first. My friend had to tell me about how much fun she was having for a week, before I even gave them a chance. Looking back, I just laugh because, why was I so hesitant on a good time? I now have years and years of memories at Phoenix that are pretty impossible to even begin to tell you about in the time we have together. We had fun, we laughed, we cried, we learned, we grew.

I've met so many genuine people [at Phoenix] who years later are still involved in supporting me in my journey through life. Some special people who have always had my back are Maurice, Melody, Trish, Carla, Suzy, DeRico, and Doug....They encourage me to be strong. They challenge me to be the best version of myself and push even harder when I achieve that. Phoenix offered programs that engaged the youth of Mulgrave Park. They saw our potential and opened doors to opportunities. We were entrepreneurs, summer camp leaders, volunteers, and adventurers.



Nykeala's speech discusses the importance of affordable housing, and how Phoenix played a role in her education journey.

I've been connected with Phoenix in many ways. In 2016, Phoenix nominated me for the Progress Women of Excellence Award, and I won! I was so proud of myself and it felt so good to be recognized as a young woman of excellence. It validated me and solidified my values and showed me that being a good person with good values doesn't go unseen.

With the support of Phoenix last year, I enrolled in the Social Service program at NSCC. It's an amazing program, I love it. The work of Phoenix made me aware of how this could be my career path. But last year was hard. I know you are all aware of the housing crisis... and I am no stranger to the effects of it. I was living temporarily with family, and uncertain of my next steps surrounding housing. The stress that created had a negative impact on many areas in my life, including my learning.

I'm excited to share that I moved [into Phoenix Student Housing on West] and this has been a game-changer. This is affordable housing for me, and I have staff who are on my team to help me succeed in any area – thank you Kathleen and Karyn. Because I'm living in a dignified and stable space, I can focus on my studies and my future. I plan to continue my education in social work. One thing that is for sure, because of the support I received from Phoenix, I know I can achieve anything I set my mind to.

Twelve years ago, I walked into Phoenix Community Centre and I was one of the first youth to participate in a program, and 12 years later here I am celebrating my journey so far with you all. So a final thank you to everyone who contributes to the Phoenix family in any way that they can. You're really making a difference in a lot of lives.

Thank you."



A Culture of Learning

At Phoenix, we recognize we are most effective when we work with intention, supporting a “culture of continuous learning” and relationship building. For example, as an agency rooted in social justice, we dedicate time to engage in critical reflection on issues surrounding diversity, equity, and inclusion on an ongoing basis. In doing so, we can better support youth, families, and communities, especially as the challenges they face have become increasingly multi-layered and complex.

“We have a commitment to living our values,” says Phoenix’s Director of Mental Health and Wellbeing Fiona. “This is the thread that links all of us together at Phoenix: a shared passion for translating our values into intentional, thoughtful, meaningful work across the agency.”

When developing training opportunities for staff, Phoenix takes an evidence-informed approach while prioritizing the voices of those we serve. “We draw from the wisdom of families and communities, from people with lived experience and expertise, from the knowledge of our staff and community partners, from best practice research – and this needs to translate into action,” says Fiona.

This year, Phoenix staff participated in a series of valuable learning opportunities. For instance, during onboarding, new staff participated in Anti-oppressive Practice Training led by Phoenix’s Social Justice Advisory Committee and external facilitator Rajeane Willis. Other training highlights from 2022 – 2023 include:

- **Phoenix Framework of Practice**
- **Narrative Practice**
- **Trauma-informed Practice**
- **Documentation Training**
- **Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST)**
- **Critical Incident Response Training**
- **Eating Disorders Training**

Offering training opportunities like these are just some of the ways Phoenix actively creates a culture of learning across the agency, but we know our work is never done. “There is a steep learning curve,” says Fiona. “It’s an ongoing and exciting process that involves a creative weaving together of passion, humility, curiosity, compassion, collaboration, and commitment.”

Phoenix Values and Guiding Principles

1. Social Justice
2. Diversity and Inclusion
3. Healthy Narratives
4. Importance of Relationships
5. Self-Determination / Client-Centered
6. Community
7. Innovation

Together, We Are Here

The past year at Phoenix has been one of growth, innovation, and joy, but it has also been full of significant challenges.

The availability of safe and affordable housing in our province is precariously low, and too many in our community continue to be impacted. The youth we serve are routinely marginalized in this regard. Not since the Halifax Explosion in 1917 has there been this many people forced to shelter outside, and this number continues to rise at an accelerated rate. In fact, the number of people sheltering outside in HRM has increased almost 500 percent in the last 4 years.* We are gravely concerned, anticipating that these housing challenges will only intensify before dignified solutions take root.

This has been an enormous challenge that Phoenix will never shy away from, but can only be addressed by the steadfast dedication and support driven by the compassion and generosity of our community. Housing is a human right in Canada, engrained in legislation and protected by law. Time and time again, our staff continue to be fierce advocates, unwavering in their commitment to the youth and families we serve.

The breadth and depth of Phoenix services could not unfold without you, and for that we are deeply grateful. Our donors, volunteers, corporate and government partners, and friends in the community are integral to ensuring Phoenix can continue to innovate and serve youth through every part of their journeys.

The possibilities for the youth, families and communities we serve are immeasurable, but only when they have the support of the community behind them.

To you, our dearest friends and allies, we offer a deep and heartfelt thanks.



Deanne MacLeod (she/her)
Chair, Board of Directors



Timothy Crooks (he/him)
Executive Director

* Chauvin, M. (2023). *A Framework to Address Homelessness in Halifax Regional Municipality*

Your Support Makes a Difference

The community has been a pivotal part of Phoenix since the beginning in 1987. In addition to the continued support we receive from all three levels of government, we operate a diversified funding program which helps ensure that Phoenix is able to continue meeting the needs of youth and their families.

Each person's circumstances and relationships are unique to them, but many people choose to maximize their giving potential by utilizing alternative giving methods, such as gifts of securities and leaving a gift in their will.

Choosing to give to Phoenix is a thoughtful and personal investment into the future of your community. By doing so, you are being a voice for social justice and will support Phoenix youth for many years to come. As the demand for our services grow and inflation rises, we hope we can continue to count on your support whether it be through grants from private foundations, participation in special events, hosting your own fundraising initiatives, corporate partnerships, individual donations, or volunteering.

From all of us at Phoenix - Thank you!



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We gratefully acknowledge every gift is meaningful and has transformative impact. By removing categories we endeavor to highlight the importance of all giving through equitable and inclusive recognition.

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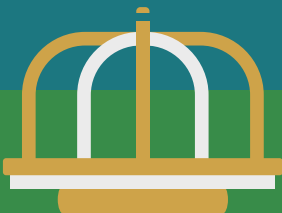


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