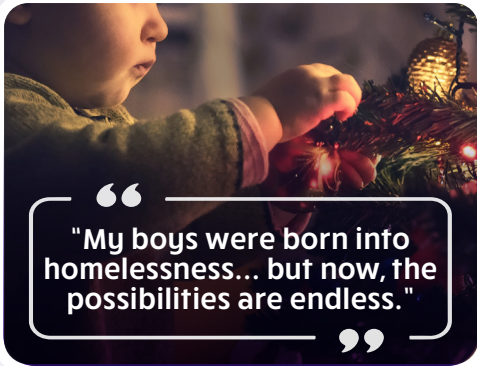




# Home *for the* Holidays JC'S STORY



“My boys were born into homelessness... but now, the possibilities are endless.”

**21-year-old JC** is excited to celebrate the first Christmas in her new apartment with her two sons. “My family was always big into Christmas, so I’m looking forward to putting up a tree and starting new traditions with my boys.”

But less than a year ago, JC never imagined that this would be her story. Kicked out of the house last December, with all the shelters at max capacity, she was left with no other choice.

“That night, I had to sleep in a stairwell. I was 6 months pregnant.”

Growing up, JC was always taught to figure things out on her own. “I always heard, oh, what if people judge you?... I never once felt like

that at Phoenix.” At 19, she connected with Phoenix Centre for Youth (PCFY). With her first son in her mother’s care, she was seeking support as she navigated child welfare services. Realizing she was pregnant a second time, she knew she needed someone in her corner more than ever.

“I remember when I met JC,” says Cheralyn, Parent Support Case Manager at PCFY. “The first thing she said was, ‘I’m getting custody of both of my kids. It would be great if you could come along with me.’ I knew then that I was going to give 100% to help her, because she put 100% trust in me.” With Cheralyn by her side, JC followed every recommendation from Child Welfare, including taking parenting classes. “She had this big fur coat, was 6 or 7 months pregnant, and would bus for two hours in the snow,” Cheralyn laughs. “Nothing was stopping her from getting to those classes.”

Even after getting kicked out that night in December, JC refused to give up. She called Phoenix Youth Shelter the next morning, and they offered her an emergency cot. “I was so relieved, but I knew it wasn’t a long-term solution.” At seven months pregnant with time ticking, JC worked with Cheralyn to come up with a solution. They connected with a community organization that was able to place JC in a hotel that January, just in time to welcome her second son.

At first, he would join his brother in their grandmother’s care, but JC and Cheralyn continued to collaborate, neither of them ever giving up on each other. Cheralyn met JC’s mother and the boys, attended hearings, liaised with Child Welfare, until one day that summer, the call came in – JC was granted full custody of her boys. “It was overwhelming at first, but Cheralyn would always ask, ‘what do you need from me?’”, recalls JC. “She would come to watch them just so I could take a shower. It was a huge help.” But for Cheralyn, she didn’t mind at all. “Watching her raise those boys is amazing. They’re going to grow into young men who are in touch with their emotions and feelings... and it gives me hope for the next generation.”

For the next few months, JC would wake up in that hotel room, grateful to be with her boys. “Even when they cry, or I’m stepping on toys, exhausted, all I can think is... I love you.” And with September came more great news – JC was approved for a housing program for young mothers. On October 3rd, she would have a home. “I was crying, I was so happy,” says JC. “Knowing that [was] a chapter of my life and not the whole story really excites me for what’s next. My boys were born homeless, but now the possibilities are endless.”

So as JC gets ready to spend the first Christmas with her boys as a family, she reflects on her journey over the last year and makes a seasonal observation.

“Life isn’t a Hallmark movie... but it kind of feels like one now. I have everything I hoped for, and more.”





## Program Highlights

# Let's Talk About Food!

32,498 visits have been made to Nova Scotia's food banks so far this year. Of those served, **1 in 5** are between **18 - 30** years old.\*



**Katie MacIntosh-Burke**, Coordinator of *Learn and Explore at Phoenix (LEAP)*, shares a new perspective on coming together over a meal.



Housing Support Worker Kyle holds a box of food delivered to PCFY by Feed Nova Scotia.

"When youth are unhoused, or paying upwards of 80% of their income in rent, it's nearly impossible to afford to eat. How can anyone show up and focus on work or school when they're always hungry?"

With grocery prices skyrocketing, it can be challenging for youth to afford the ingredients needed to make nutritious meals. Knowing how to store and preserve food – *especially while living in a tent* – is just as difficult.

"During my time working at the Shelter, I became really good at making recipes using ingredients from the food truck, and recognized that the youth could benefit from that knowledge as well.

I started a weekly program where upward of 15 youth could come together to talk about food and share a meal. Feed Nova Scotia is an incredible support for us, and the recipe is determined by the ingredients dropped off to **Phoenix Centre for Youth (PCFY)** during their weekly delivery.

We talk about tips and tricks to add flavour and stretching our dollars by buying in bulk. We discuss the importance of nutrition on our energy and mental health, how to re-heat and keep food from spoiling, and youth find comfort bringing their own cultural recipes to share and prepare. Afterwards, youth receive a gift card so they can purchase any extra ingredients and recreate the meal at home."

It's nearly impossible to afford to eat.

How can anyone show up and focus on work or school when they're always hungry?

\* Food Banks Canada (2023). *HungerCount 2023*. Mississauga: Food Banks Canada

Head over to our website to see some of the recipes we've made for LEAP's **Let's Talk About Food Program**, or fill out the form to share a recipe with us!

[www.phoenixyouth.ca/learn-and-explore-phoenix](http://www.phoenixyouth.ca/learn-and-explore-phoenix)

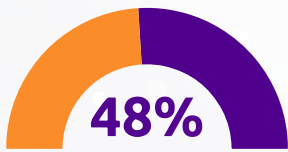
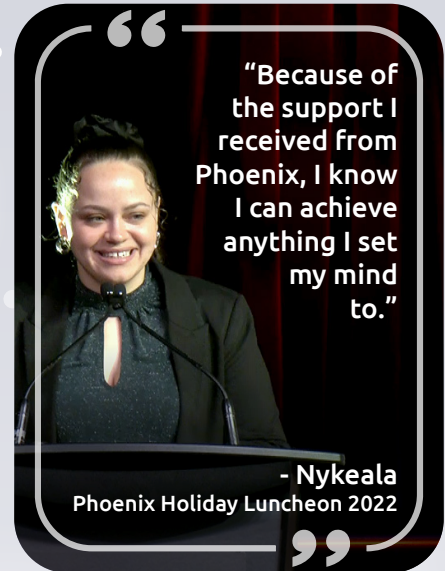


Phoenix Holiday Luncheon

# Opening Doors to Opportunity

Thirteen years ago, Nykeala walked into the Phoenix Youth and Community Centre (PYCC) in Mulgrave Park for the first time. “My friend had to tell me about how much fun she was having for a week, before I even gave them a chance. Now, I have years and years of memories that are impossible to even begin to tell you about.”

As the years went on, Nykeala never turned down an opportunity to get involved. From singing in the Phoenix Choir, to co-founding Mulgrave Park Spread the Love Day, she quickly became recognized as a leader within her community. “We were entrepreneurs, summer camp leaders, volunteers, and adventurers. [Phoenix] saw our potential and opened doors to opportunities.”



Post-secondary students who have gone without groceries in order to pay for housing.\*\*

At last year’s Phoenix Holiday Luncheon, Nykeala shared a remarkable speech about her journey, and the need for affordable student housing. “I know you are all aware of the housing crisis. The stress that created had a negative impact on many areas in my life, including my learning.”

And she is not alone. According to data collected by the Provincial Housing Needs Assessment, 48% of student respondents admit they’ve gone without groceries to pay for housing costs, and despite an increase in enrollment, administrators are seeing more and more students dropping out due to the housing crisis.\*\*

“Moving into Phoenix Student Housing on West (SHOW) has been a game-changer. This is affordable housing for me, and I have staff who are on my team to help me succeed. 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, and because of the support I received from Phoenix, I know I can achieve anything I set my mind to.”

\*\*Nova Scotia Provincial Housing needs Assessment Report (2022). Turner Drake & Partners Ltd



## Phoenix Holiday Luncheon

**Tuesday, December 5, 2023**

We hope you’ll join us as we celebrate youth, families, and community!

Presented By







# Phoenix Wishlist 2023



Support youth and families in our community!  
Make a monetary gift, donate items from our wishlist, or host a donation drive with your school, workplace, or community group!

## Warm Clothing & Outerwear

(All sizes, all genders) **Gently used or new** boots, mittens, gloves, PJs, slippers, scarves, hoodies, rain jackets, umbrellas, hats, winter coats. **New** underwear, bras, and socks, in original packaging.



## Gift Cards & Bus Tickets

Sheets of bus tickets. Gift cards for big box stores (ie Walmart, for basic needs such as food, baby items, household supplies, etc.), grocery stores, pharmacies, restaurants, and pre-paid phonecards.



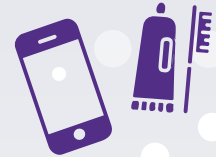
## Household & Family Items

**Gently used or new** pillows and pillowcases, bedding (all sizes, especially twin) towels, and facecloths. New pots & pans, disinfecting wipes, cleaning products, laundry soap. **New** baby clothes, toys, wet wipes, mittens, diapers (all sizes, especially larger sizes), formula (or gift cards to buy formula), hats, blankets, pacifiers. **Gently used or new** children's clothing, toys, footwear, shoes, books.



## Hygiene & Personal Items

(**New, unopened** hygiene products only please. **Neutral scents and alcohol-free**) Shampoo, conditioner, bodywash, disposable razors, lip balm, hand & body lotion, shaving cream, tampons, pads, deodorant, masks, hand sanitizer, toilet paper, mouthwash, toothpaste, and toothbrushes. Unlocked cellphones, charging cables & blocks, headphones.



## EMERGENCY ITEMS ARE NEEDED

As a result of the housing crisis, we are now seeking donations of emergency items to support youth and families who are unhoused. These items include but are not limited to: Tents, sleeping bags, tarps, rope, flashlights, batteries (AA and AAA), headlamps, mattress pads, hand & foot warmers, waterproof bags, wool blankets, ponchos, portable battery packs, food coolers, backpacks, travel-sized hygiene products.



Thank-you for your continuous support this holiday season!

Donations can be dropped off by December 13th

**Phoenix Centre for Youth, 6035 Coburg Rd.**

**Monday - Friday, 9am - 4pm**

