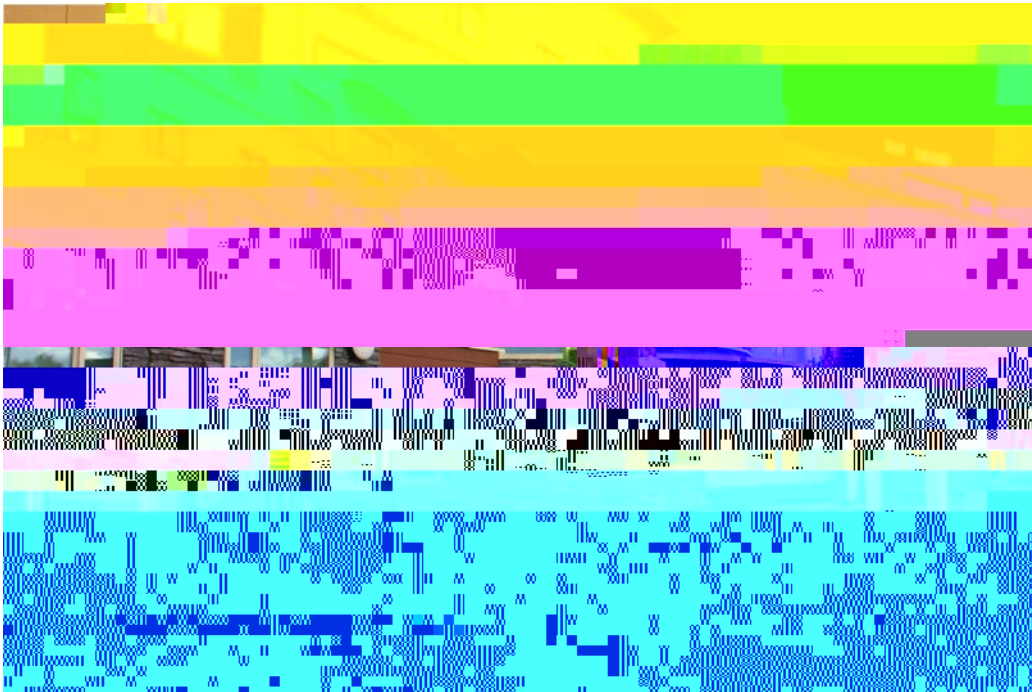


taw w pe-apik •
poohsapoot, amo ihtopiit •
edanigha, ho a •
annaii t'sat dhiindii ts'at nizheh da'on tinich'uh •
qain, aimaruatun aquviatin •
come and sit and be at home •

A report based on sharing circles with residents and staff from Ambrose Place



* * *

The mission of Ambrose Place is to create opportunities for healthy, safe, affordable homes for individuals and families of Indigenous ancestry in a culturally sensitive context.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report is dedicated to:

Ambrose Daniels and everyone living on the streets.

All of the residents at Ambrose Place, including residents who have passed away.

Strengthening the worldview and values of Indigenous peoples and decolonization through providing homes for Indigenous peoples.

Everyone who participated in the study, including the residents and staff who shared their words and experiences with the researchers in sharing circles. Sharing personal experiences was difficult for some. Words cannot express our gratitude and appreciation. This study would not have been possible if not for the openness and courage of participants.

This research was created and conducted collaboratively by:

Norbert Dumais, Neil Pascal, Carola Cunningham, Maggie Hodgson, Russell Auger, Dexter Severight, and Lavine Horsefall (Ambrose Place)

Erin Gray, MacEwan University, Josh Evans, University of Alberta, Bernadette Pauly, Meaghan Brown and Tim Stockwell, Canadian Institute for Substance Use Research, University of Victoria (Canadian Managed Alcohol Program Study)

Julia Weaver, Tristan Robinson, Shireen Surood, and Diana Steinhauer (Alberta Health Services)

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The title of this report is in Cree, Blackfoot, Dene, Gwich'in, Inuvialuktun, and English in order to acknowledge the cultural diversity of Ambrose Place residents and staff and their ancestors.

Table of Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	2
I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	4
II. INTRODUCTION.....	6
a. The Ambrose Place Story	6
b. Ambrose Place: Approach to Managing Alcohol.....	9
c. Goal of this Research.....	11
d. Indigenous Perspectives on Indigenous Homelessness	11
e. Western Perspectives on Homelessness and Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) with a Harm Reduction Approach	13
III. THE PROCESS.....	15
IV. WHAT WE HEARD.....	17
a. Resident Sharing Circles.....	17
b. Staff Sharing Circles.....	28
V. ONGOING CHALLENGES	33
VI. CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS.....	34
VII. ACTION ITEMS.....	37
VIII. INDIGENOUS REFERENCES	38
IX. WESTERN REFERENCES.....	40

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In collaboration and with humility, Indigenous residents, staff, Elders, Knowledge Keepers and Western researchers explore the programming and ways of Ambrose Place. This report shares resident and staff knowledge to understand changes experienced among residents as they enter and live at Ambrose Place. This report sheds light on residents' experiences that occur across multiple dimensions including mental, emotional, physical, social and spiritual life.

Sharing circles were held at Ambrose Place with staff and residents between January and August 2017. A smudging ceremony preceded each period of sharing. Importantly, our research team was guided by Indigenous ways of knowing and respect for the values and beliefs of Ambrose Place. This research is based upon oral teachings and Natural Law. Together, we participated in ceremonies, smudges, and pipe ceremonies as a part of strengthening our relationship. Notably, the Western researchers have been humbled by this experience. As shared by one of the Elders, the Western researchers needed to learn how to “waste time” with their Indigenous colleagues.

Knowledge from the sharing circles with staff revealed how Ambrose Place has contributed to the overall well-being of residents and that Ambrose has “*Become home*” and has created a “*Family*” for residents. The knowledge that “*Ceremony can heal*” highlights the importance and critical nature of ceremony for both staff and residents. Ceremony is not just a component of

At the time of writing, staff and residents are already working to address many of these challenges. The recommendations in this report attempt to respond to these challenges.

II. INTRODUCTION

a. The Ambrose Place Story

Ambrose Place provides housing and wrap-around culturally appropriate support services primarily to individuals and couples of Indigenous ancestry. These services are offered using a harm reduction model, which is based on improving residents' quality of life, health, and wellbeing in a non-judgmental and gradual way by meeting people where they are at. One of the aspects of this harm reduction model is a managed alcohol program which strengthens residents' capacity to manage their use of alcohol.

Ambrose Place is inspired by, and named after, Ambrose Daniels, who died due to complications from pneumonia at the age of 51. Ambrose was born and raised in the Buffalo Lake Métis Settlement where he was surrounded by a supportive community and loving family and known by his family and friends as "Uncle Smurf." Unfortunately, health issues eventually led to an inability to continue to work in his trade and contributed to his development of a substance use problem. Ultimately, Ambrose chose to live with a new-found family in Edmonton's inner city, often generously offering others a place to stay at night in his apartment. His constant visitors, however, led to an eviction notice and homelessness. He was unable to find housing for the remainder of his life, as the housing units available were hard to access for someone who was Indigenous with addictions issues and shelters were often filled to capacity. One particularly cold night, Ambrose contracted pneumonia, and without a home to rest and regain his health, he passed away from complications from this illness. Ambrose Place recognizes that Ambrose Daniels' journey to recovery and reclaiming his life was filled with obstacles, and aims to help

community facilities on the main floor, including a dining area where meals are provided and an outdoor garden.

At the spiritual core of the building is a ceremony room. This circular room is a vital space at Ambrose Place. It is used for sharing circles, wakes, feasts, memorial feasts, singing, dancing, pipe ceremonies, smudges, shaking tents, one-on-one counselling, naming ceremonies, sobriety birthdays, as a cultural invitation to community members, and to conduct diplomatic relations with international visitors, intertribal relations, and political relations with government officials.

The significance of spiritual ceremonies is to know and honour the connection of all life forms on the land, in the sky, and beyond into the co

For example, the Edmonton Police Service requested the allocation of two beds for individuals who are a part of their Heavy

drugs were not part of the way Indigenous peoples traditionally lived, and acknowledging the many historical and contemporary harms created by substance use, the underlying goal of Ambrose is to foster healing and, where possible, nurture a reduced dependence on all substances, including alcohol. Indigenous ceremony and Indigenous community animate Ambrose Place – unconditional love and obligation to support the well-being of their people are at the heart of this program.

At intake, residents are provided an orientation to the rules in the program including the rules around alcohol and alcohol use and the procedures staff follow when residents are given access to alcohol residents themselves have purchased. Residents are not permitted to store alcohol in their apartments. They are required to check their alcohol in at the front desk. Residents can check in their hard liquor, but it cannot be used as their drinks at Ambrose. Residents' hard liquor is returned to them at their request, but they cannot consume it on the premises. Once alcohol is checked in, residents may request a maximum of 3 drinks (beer or wine only) in 3 hours. Typically, residents can be given their drinks from 7am to midnight. However, most residents do not begin to drink until they leave Ambrose in the morning after breakfast and after morning ceremony.

Residents must come to the staff desk to ask for their drink. The staff assess residents before serving. Residents must consume their drink in their apartment. Drinking in the common area is prohibited. The program stocks 'emergency beer' for residents who run out of alcohol and do not have money to purchase more when they are showing signs of alcohol withdrawal. Staff closely monitor heavy drinkers in the program. Residents undergo a health assessment when entering the program and subsequently undergo regular assessments with a physician. The initial medical assessment helps Ambrose staff to identify heavy drinkers and this informs the communication between staff and residents regarding their alcohol use. When these and other residents are visibly intoxicated staff will encourage residents to reduce the amount of alcohol they consume (for example, by "watering down" their drink). Staff will also encourage residents to substitute a low-alcohol beer for a normal drink.

At times residents attempt to hide extra drinks including hard alcohol when they come home to Ambrose. Residents are reminded that they are not allowed to do so but there are no real negative consequences issued by staff on these occasions. Acceptance and tolerance and kindness are

paramount features of Ambrose. From the perspective of Ambrose management, “we have a three strikes policy, but we play a new game every week...our goal is to keep people alive and keep them safe.”

c. Goal of this Research

The study this report is based on was developed to better understand Ambrose Place in general and its programming approach to homelessness. More specifically, the goal of this research was to create a detailed description of the changes that occur across multiple dimensions, including mental, emotional, physical, social and spiritual, as residents enter and live at Ambrose Place. To do so we draw upon the strengths of both Indigenous Knowledges and Western Knowledges through the creation of “ethical space” (p. 193)^b, using an approach Indigenous scholars Marilyn Iwama, Murdena Marshall, Albert Marshall and Cheryl Bartlett call “Two-Eyed Seeing^c.” As these authors emphasize, “Two-Eyed Seeing” “neither merges two knowledge systems into one nor does it paste bits of Indigenous knowledge onto Western” (p. 5)^c. Instead, “Two-Eyed Seeing” emphasizes “a weaving back and forth between knowledge in which each strand is necessary to the process” (p. 5)^c.

d. Indigenous Perspectives on Indigenous Homelessness

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada has documented, in detail, Canada’s oppression and genocide of Indigenous Peoples over the past century. During this time, policies administered by the Government of Canada attempted to destroy Indigenous political and social institutions, forcibly relocated communities, restricted their movement, banned their languages, persecuted their spiritual leaders, and removed their children^{d,e,f}. Indigenous Peoples have experienced collective and enduring traumas as a result of this cultural genocide^g. As a result, intergenerational trauma must be taken into consideration in any examination of Indigenous homelessness^{h,i,j,k,l}. Moreover, Indigenous homelessness must be understood in the context of Indigenous worldviews, Indigenous definitions of home, and the continuing impacts of settler colonialism^j. Building on this understanding, Indigenous scholar Jessie Thistle places Indigenous homelessness in the context of “individuals, families, and communities isolated from their relationships to land, water, place, family, kin, each other, animals, cultures, languages and

identities” (p.6)¹. Furthermore, Thistle documents 12 dimensions of Indigenous homelessness articulated by Indigenous Peoples across Canada (p. 10-12)¹:

Historic Displacement Homelessness – “Indigenous communities and Nations made historically homeless after being displaced from pre-colonial Indigenous lands.”

Contemporary Geographic Separation Homelessness – “An Indigenous individual’s or community’s separation from Indigenous lands, after colonial control.”

Spiritual Disconnection Homelessness – “An Indigenous individual’s or community’s separation from Indigenous worldviews or connection to the Creator or equivalent deity.”

Mental Disruption and Imbalance Homelessness – “Mental homelessness, described as an imbalance of mental faculties, experienced by Indigenous individuals and communities caused by colonization’s entrenched social and economic marginalization of Indigenous Peoples.”

Cultural Disintegration and Loss Homelessness – “Homelessness that totally dislocates or alienates Indigenous individuals and communities from their culture and from the relationship web of Indigenous society known as ‘All My Relations’.”

Overcrowding Homelessness – “The number of people per dwelling in urban and rural Indigenous households that exceeds the national Canadian household average, thus contributing to and creating unsafe, unhealthy and overcrowded living spaces, in turn causing homelessness.”

Relocation and Mobility Homelessness – “Mobile Indigenous homOvercoi395aa3rat7e8i7h9s2soc fdigen

uncooperative band or community councils, hostile community and kin members, lateral violence and cultural dislocation.”

Nowhere to Go Homelessness – “A complete lack of access to stable shelter, housing, accommodation, shelter services or relationships; literally having nowhere to go.”

Escaping or Evading Harm Homelessness – “Indigenous persons fleeing, leaving or vacating unstable, unsafe, unhealthy or overcrowded households or homes to obtain a measure of safety or to survive. Young people, women, and LGBTQ2S people are particularly vulnerable.”

Emergency Crisis Homelessness – “Natural disasters, large-scale environmental manipulation and acts of human mischief and destruction, along with bureaucratic red tape, combining to cause Indigenous people to lose their homes because the system is not ready or willing to cope with an immediate demand for housing.”

Climatic Refugee Homelessness – “Indigenous peoples whose lifestyle, subsistence patterns and food sources, relationship to animals, and connection to land and water have been greatly altered by drastic and cumulative weather shifts due to climate change. These shifts have made individuals and entire Indigenous communities homeless.”

These dimensions illustrate how Indigenous homelessness is experienced in different ways. Indigenous homelessness is not simply the lack of permanent shelter. It refers to an on-going collective experience with historical roots: namely, the disruption of traditional governance, dispossession of lands and territory, disconnection from ceremony, relationships, language and identity, and non-recognition of Indigenous peoples’ claims by colonial governments.

e. Western Perspectives on Homelessness and Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) with a Harm Reduction Approach

The over-representation of Indigenous peoples among vulnerable and homeless populations is a widespread issue in cities across Canada. In Edmonton, a city where Indigenous peoples represent roughly 6% of the total population, the 2016 Point in Time Count recorded that Indigenous individuals made up 58% of the total number of individuals experiencing homelessness².

Ambrose Place is categorized as a permanent supportive housing (PSH) facility. Ambrose Place is a unique type of PSH for two reasons. First, Ambrose Place practices a harm reduction approach. Second, Ambrose Place's programming is rooted in Indigenous ways of knowing and being. An AHS report based on 100 interviews with Indigenous mental health and addictions service-users across Alberta confirms the need for these approaches and calls for more access to harm reduction housing, cultural programming and Elders in the province³.

There is a small but robust body of evidence supporting the effectiveness of permanent supportive housing (PSH) practicing a harm reduction approach in rehousing chronically homeless individuals with severe alcohol use problems. Studies have shown that PSH programs offering harm reduction can help the hardest-to-serve, chronically homeless population achieve housing stability^{4,5}. These programs fill a gap in terms of the housing options for chronically homeless individuals who have achieved little success or are not interested in abstinence-based treatment settings². These programs have also been linked to housing attainment, retention and stability, relative decreases in costs, decrease in alcohol use outcomes, decreases in use of emergency services, and decreases in jailing days and bookings^{4,5,6,7,8,9,10}. In programs with managed-alcohol components, time spent in program is associated with consuming fewer drinks and less alcohol related harms¹¹. Motivation to change and time spent in program appear to be two factors associated with these positive impacts^{8,9,12}.

Additional research indicates that a sense of belonging may also contribute to positive change; Maté and Perry identify that when individuals who were formerly chronic users of illicit drugs or alcohol have their belonging needs met, self-soothing through the use of addictive substances often becomes unnecessary and individuals may eventually quit using¹³. Bruce Perry stated, "If we create environments that are safe and predic

Ambrose Place's success; utilizing approaches steeped in Indigenous knowledge to satisfy human needs of residents so that they may rise to their potential. There is currently no scientific analysis of PSH utilizing a harm reduction approach and offering Indigenous cultural programming. In other words, there is a lack of research on *Indigenous Permanent Supportive Housing* (IPSH). This is a gap in the literature that research on Ambrose Place is well positioned

research plan and assisted with gathering information from residents. The resident peer helpers played an integral role in supporting residents while they shared their wisdom about their experiences before and after coming to live at Ambrose Place.

Beginning in January 2017, we organized a series of sharing circles, first with staff and then with residents, to gather information about staff and residents' experiences of Ambrose Place. The last sharing circle was held in August 2017.

Sharing circles have a sacred meaning in Indigenous cultures and are often used as part of ceremony and as a way of healing¹⁴. Our sharing circles were held in either the boardroom or ceremony room at Ambrose Place. They consisted of individuals seated in a circle. Circles began with a smudging ceremony and then a period of sharing followed.

Our staff sharing circles met five times over several months and involved Alberta Health Services on-site staff and Niginan staff and management. Staff were asked about the residents who had impacted them the most, what makes Ambrose Place different from non-Indigenous agencies, the effect of ceremony on themselves and residents, and the barriers that they faced to providing the best care for residents. They were also tasked to brainstorm questions to ask residents in the sharing circles and interviews that were conducted in the summer and fall of 2017.

Our resident sharing circles met three times over the course of several weeks and involved a total of 13 participants. The questions and topics for these sharing circles were developed based on suggestions from the staff sharing circles. Our resident helpers (*oskapewisak*)/resource persons, Neil and Norbert, were an essential part of these sharing circles, as they helped to create a safe space for participants to share honestly about their experiences. At the first meeting, Neil and Norbert asked participants to share their experiences living at Ambrose Place. These open-ended questions invited participants to talk about their relationship to staff, other residents and the programs Ambrose Place offers. At the second meeting, Neil and Norbert asked participants to talk about their life before coming to Ambrose Place. This sharing touched on many difficult and emotional experiences from childhood to adulthood. At the third meeting, Norbert and Neil

asked participants to talk about their experience of love, respect and community. This sharing provided insight into the supportive relationships that the Ambrose community provides.

After transcribing the recordings from the sharing circles and removing all identifying information, we held two meetings to reflect on resident and staff sharing and identify common themes. These themes are found in section IV below.

Again, we acknowledge the incredible contributions of residents and staff who shared their experiences with us at these sharing circles. Sharing personal experiences was difficult for some. Words cannot express our gratitude and appreciation. This study would not have been possible if not for the openness and courage of participants.

IV. WHAT WE HEARD

a. Resident Sharing Circles

This section's analysis focuses on what residents shared about their lives before coming to Ambrose Place, their experiences living at Ambrose Place, and their experiences of love, respect and community.

"It's a tough life out there"

Residents shared experiences of their lives before they moved to Ambrose Place. Most lived on the streets prior to coming to Ambrose and all reported struggles with maintaining adequate housing during different times in their lives. Residents talked about their ongoing search for safe places to sleep and how they tried to rely on others who, like them, were living rough.

I don't know, I came from the streets, I guess. I was having a hard life.

We moved back to my reserve and we found out our house was taken. We came here [to Edmonton]. Been on the streets here. And we fell off, fell off drinking. Well, me mostly.

Residents shared their long histories with drug and alcohol use before living at Ambrose. They described their experiences with trauma, hardships, and severe substance use dependence.

Drinking was my buddy. But I worked most of my life. I learned how to control my drinking for working days. I mean, not working days, eh? I managed to, ah, scrape it 'til Friday. Then I'd get paid and I'd go by the bar. And I was the life of the party I guess. And I did that up 'til maybe about 4 years ago. I still drink, I go on my binge once in every 3 months or something like that. Something hits me. It's a time where I need to get out of my own mind, eh? I don't want to...I don't want to live this, I don't want to face it, I don't want to even think about it. So I just drink.

I used to drink, um...because I was homeless, like drinking helps you forget everything. At least some parts.

The money I made I put some aside for to buy myself something nice and the rest I'd buy drugs or booze or go and share with my so-called friends. There's always people that just use me and still to this day they do. They said oh we love you and like you and all this stuff but you're scheming how to get money out of me and that to buy booze and drugs.

I've seen people leave this world way too soon and like I said I was married to the stuff and it meant more to me than anything in the world to me. I just loved being stoned it just killed everything that I was feeling and I loved the feeling that I got when a drug hit the bloodstream. Nothing else mattered. My kids didn't matter, my wife didn't matter, my family didn't matter; all that mattered was that I was stoned. How I got it, it didn't matter how I got it. I just did whatever I could to get it and that's the sad part of it. Alcohol and drugs were my life for a lot of years.

As can be seen from the previous quotations, substance use became a way of life for residents and served to mask and subdue their pain and loss. In the following descriptions of life after Ambrose Place, residents speak to the positive changes that they have experienced, including those related to substance use.

“Here, now, I have a home”

Resili9 -56I do.rtd79xpec

Ambrose provides that environment for me to stay healthy. And that's good. Yeah.

My health was okay or it seems like it. I was drunk most of the time and I was hungover a lot of times so when I'm hungover I don't eat and I won't go to any place and ask for help where they serve food like Salvation Army or other places. I wouldn't go there. I'm fairly independent. I guess Ambrose is the first place I ever came to in my life I guess for health.

My hope is to, as my health improves, that I move on. But I'm grateful for where I'm at. For the time being, you know. You just have to dial the phone downstairs and they'll come running upstairs. And they'll check on you. I mean, how many people do that in other places? You know, you either have to be in a homecare or a hospital. But in a housing unit, it's amazing that they have it, actually. I was surprised they had 24-hour healthcare. It's there if you need it, and food's there.

Many residents experienced a shift in their substance use once they began to settle into healthier and more predictable routines than can be experienced while living on the streets or in temporary housing. Self-identified changes in substance use and ability to budget money are captured in the following quotations.

Um, I don't enjoy alcohol as much as I used to.

So, but trying to cut back on the drinking but that's tough because I've always been an alcoholic so I mean it's just really tough. It's tough because you can't really. I don't like to drink, bring my booze here because I don't want to leave it behind the counter and it kind of ticks me off because you can't bring your 15 pack to your room but in that respect- it's probably best probably better that I can't. You know so maybe its best that I'm trying to cut back on the drinking but the 8 pack seems (n001) 45-24 (K, n) 8, 63, 09 Turf (6 ne) 8) 116

sort of thing. So, Ambrose to me is different in that way. That they try to work with you, and, ah, at the same time, they try to help you to help yourself.

It's a safe place, you got staff here that literally go out of their comfort zone to help people. ...I watch these staff go pick guys up that are passed out, and they help everybody. You know, they care about people. They watch over every one...

This place is pretty cool...they came and got me out of the hospital when I was sick.

I would describe Ambrose as it's home. [Before] I couldn't live in a house more than 2 years. And I've always been living in facilities, boarding schools, and whatnot. But here, at first I kind of resented it because it started feeling like a facility. Then things started changing. I drank to forget and things like that. Now I hardly ever drink. I do a lot of, ah, Native crafts to keep myself busy. And I don't know, when I go somewhere, I'm bragging about it; living at Ambrose. Price is a little steep, but it's well worth it.

I just moved in. And, so far it's been good. A little bit overwhelming, but very good. I feel cared for here. And um, basically I'd been on the streets for quite some time as well. It's my first time living in a facility like this, so everything's new to me. But it's comfortable. It's homey and people are good here, everybody's friendly. And I feel good.

I like to call this place home. And I feel really safe here. I'm struggling with alcohol addiction. And for here, I find I can trust people. Whereas I have a trusting issue. And I like to get hugs, ha.

Residents shared a range of experiences with and perceptions on having access to Indigenous cultural ceremonies, Elders and medicines from the land.

While some residents have experienced long histories practicing cultural ceremony and are very involved in participating in ceremony at Ambrose, others make choices not to be involved and for some participating in ceremony is new to them. Further still, some residents expressed the importance of their connection to Christianity.

Since living here I participate in ceremony...And I sometimes it's a lonely place using medicines, sometimes and I really appreciate the people who live here because they don't come around from their drinking and drugs and usually stay away from the ceremony

room. But we're always praying for them too... I love the la

Residents talked about how it was significant to them that most staff are Indigenous. They noted

everybody. I've always just kept to myself but here I'm starting to get to know people right? Part of I guess some of the inner side of people and not so scared. I used to be scared for even somebody to look at me but I do belong here and the staff are always treating me like I'm some kind of important person.

I feel a sense of community and belonging here. People are nice. And I always wanted a place like this. A big TV, couch. But I can do that in my room too, baby. In privacy! My own bed and everything. And I have a sense of belonging; that I could do important things with other people and in life. Instead of getting bitter I'll decide to get better.

Residents commented they feel respected, cared for and listened to at Ambrose Place and that this is demonstrated through how staff and management are both respectful and supportive and how they validate and believe in them. Residents describe staff as 'going the extra mile' for them.

Yeah, I think I'm respected. Ah, there's a lot of activities that happen within Ambrose. And, um, and it's your choice whether to participate or, or not. And ah, and if you participate, you know, you're welcome to take part. And if I don't feel like participating, that's fine too. And that's important to me; that if I don't want to participate in any function, that's my choice. So, I think in that way, I feel respected.

I, ah, do feel respected by the staff. And I sure, hopefully the staff have that respect too. Because I want them to have respect because they're trying real hard to work. They're really trying hard.

Um, I feel respected and listened to at Ambrose. And the staff are very, very, ah, helpful. Don't matter what it is. Even if it's out of their league, they'll try to correct it for you. Which is something that I haven't seen in other – I've been in facilities, in and out of facilities.

Staff treat people with respect. And they tolerate a lot. They tolerate a lot of swearing, and cursing, and stuff that, ah, if they were – if we were in another place, those people would lock you up right away and just leave you by yourself until you... But these people, they won't do that. They make sure you're safe, they make sure you're okay before they leave you alone. You know, they watch you, they walk beside you so you don't fall.

I definitely feel cared for here, since I've been here. Everyone's making me feel comfortable. Physically, mentally, in all aspects I feel cared for. First facility that I've known that has this kind of staff and tenants. Yeah, very cared for.

I remember one time I was, ah, I was drinking out back in the back alley. I think I might have passed out in the back alley. And I remember one of the staff members came back there and helped me back in. But I know something like that would never have happened anywhere else, eh?

I'm grateful that I feel cared for. It's a nice feeling. You know? It's a nice feeling. You feel good. You feel worthy. You feel, you feel, you know, you feel good inside. Anyway, I could explain it other ways, but it's just good. You just have a nice feeling about it.

When somebody takes the time to just notice you and say "how are you doing?"

Residents describe their connection to other residents and staff like that of a family. Many residents feel that they are loved at Ambrose Place. Residents' comments suggest that over time, they settle and become less guarded and allow themselves to feel like they belong. Eventually they see the staff and other residents as allies and potential friends.

When I first got here I didn't feel loved because I was someone new. But they made me feel like I belonged here when I first got here, they didn't try to, I didn't feel ostracized like they didn't want me. And then they made me feel like they respected me, cared for, and then eventually I see the love that they actually do love me here, you know? I'm not talking just about the staff I'm talking about everybody is a family. It's like a big family now...It's a tough life out there being alone, you know. It's an ugly feeling not having

do it because of, ah, the love of their job and the people that they interact with. And, um, so to me that says a lot for the staff here. They do it because they, they, ah, they're sharing what they have with other people. And trying to make life easier for me.

I love everybody in this room, everybody that I see in the morning I try to wish them

Getting my TV. Um, that's probably the smartest thing I ever did, is getting my own TV.

It's technical to maneuver your beads to exactly the way you want them. And it's a great big thing when you finally do it, eh? So, you practice that stitch so you don't forget.

I'm proud of this place...I'm proud of taking my medicine.

I'm proud of myself for going to the pow-wow... I got to see my daughter and granddaughter dance.

I'm proud of my kids. And that I finished a course. I'm proud of that. But I've had a slip since. But I'm not going to beat myself up for that. Just keep trying again. And I'm proud I made this meeting today, too.

b. Staff Sharing Circles

The following section's analysis focuses on what staff shared regarding their relationships with residents and ceremony and their discussion around what makes Ambrose Place different.

"This has become home"

Staff members observed many changes in residents they worked with every day. Staff identified that certain residents' behaviours had changed, even though they may still be struggling in other aspects of their lives. One of the main changes that staff identified was that many residents now felt at home and saw Ambrose Place as their home.

Staff participants described seeing many different changes among residents. For example, staff observed a decrease in some clients' interactions with emergency services, with one staff member describing a client who used to have daily interactions with the police, and who "hasn't had any involvement with EPS since." Staff also noticed changes in residents' attitudes towards staff, increases in residents' openness with staff, decreases in violent behaviour, and increased stabilization and improvement in residents' health and wellbeing.

When she makes mistakes she knows how to apologize and just the way she does things she's learning how to change behaviours. So those behaviours and the changes that she's

making, they're little but they're big, right? So those to me are big successes right when you see those little things.

While some staff described seeing residents cycle in and out of sobriety or continue to use and observed others refraining from drinking, other staff identified that some residents' cycle of addiction continues at Ambrose Place but is less severe:

And a lot of them you can see the change on them when they first came into here, to like how they are now, they are still in the cycle of their addictions and stuff but it's not as bad as it was when they first came here like [resident]. [...] the change from her first moving into here to now, she does really good and she does put in more effort to get clean.

One of the main changes that staff identified is residents' increased sense of home, safety, and stability. Staff noted that while many residents continue to use, they observed meaningful changes in residents, including having them recognize Ambrose Place as their home:

And even when you see she goes out there and does things that are not healthy she knows how to come home where it's safe so she always comes back here to rest and get better right? So she knows that this is home right? So I think that that's a huge piece. And I think for a lot of the clients it's so hard to center on one, but I think that that's the thing that I really see is that this has become home, so even if they're going out there and drinking and using drugs, they're coming back here, they know where to come home to be safe.

Staff noted how some residents have never been housed successfully, suggesting that a feeling of belonging and home contributes to residents' success at Ambrose Place:

Look at [resident] how many times do we have people from the outside come and said never have these people been housed successfully? Even [resident] her worker said never has she been housed successfully and so happily [...] it's because their spirit feels home.

Staff members identified many changes in residents, big and small, and noted that a feeling of home was at the core of some of these changes. Staff's observations of residents' increased sense

of home and belonging is echoed by their own feelings of belonging to a family at Ambrose Place.

“This is my family”

While talking about the residents that impacted them most and what makes Ambrose Place different from other agencies, many staff discussed their close relationships with clients and how they saw the staff and residents at Ambrose Place as their family. Some staff explained that their understanding of residents and staff as family was a part of their Indigenous worldview.

Throughout the sharing circles and interviews, the staff communicated the love they have for the residents at Ambrose Place and noted that their ability to develop personal relationships with residents is a part of what makes Ambrose Place unique. Staff argued that while others might see their interactions with residents as unprofessional, they see and care for the residents as a part of their family and community. In this way, they show that they see this way of relating to each other at Ambrose Place as important and also inevitable:

I think it's different here because a lot of the times what you hear in the health care field is you're not supposed to get attached but here it's like inevitable, we can't help it, even though if we're trying to stay professional, either they get attached to us or we get attached to them, it goes either way. But of course we are going to have feelings like when [resident] passed it was so hard for everybody. But I'd rather have my feelings hurt just to make the end of his life much more enjoyable and feeling more comfortable with people. You know it's worth it. It's not for nothing.

Many staff also noted how the appeal of working with their own Indigenous people and culture draws them to work at Ambrose Place and makes them feel more like part of a family. For some staff, personal experiences also contribute to this feeling, as they have family members who had gone through similar struggles to the residents. In some cases, residents were actually related to staff members. Whatever the individual connections, however, staff members' feelings of belonging enables them to connect with residents in a personal way:

The reason why I started working here was because I felt I was more of a person, how do you say it, it was between this place and another and the other one I kind of would have

just been like a number, you know what I mean? But here, we can actually be personal with the clients.

Staff described the importance of building close, trusting relationships with residents. Despite the fact that not all interactions with residents were always positive, staff said that they “still go

In this way, staff described their love for Am

Staff responses about the value of ceremony also included identifying its impact on residents, many of whom due to loss of culture had not had access to ceremony or medicines before. Other staff members spoke about the specific effects that ceremony had on individuals, including “redirecting people that are being violent,” helping people “stay sober,” giving people a sense of purpose, and helping people process trauma and grief:

I would say every morning, especially just recently there is a new Elder who is facilitating a smudge every morning and watching people start to pick up on that and to come in and, and a community start to build just around that alone. Because there was a time where that stopped happening for a brief time and I noticed the effect that had on people, started to I guess allow people to drift away from that connection. And so the recent one was a client, her name is [resident], who is really finding that to be helpful in her process of grieving, also her process of sort becoming more connected with herself. And so she’s a person who has been participating in those and found them to be really helpful to help her sort of feel the feelings that she’s been trying to numb out. So it’s been heavy and that a lot of emotions have come out but also really cathartic in that it’s helped her to begin to repair some of the things she feels she has lost.

Not only do staff explain the integral importance of ceremony for themselves and the benefit of having access to ceremony every day at Ambrose Place, they also note the effect that ceremony can have on others entering the building, including visitors and residents. In particular, they note that ceremony can lead to feelings of peace and calm and can aid in residents’ healing, sobriety, and in redirecting residents from certain behaviours.

V. ONGOING CHALLENGES

During sharing circles and subsequent research team meetings, residents and staff identified ongoing challenges relating to the day-to-day operation of Ambrose Place. At the time of writing, staff and residents were already working to address many of these challenges. Below is a brief summary of the challenges identified.

Safety and Security

people, which instills hope in them. Ambrose Place gives residents hope and accepts them with love.

VII.

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