



# nourish change

*Names are changed to protect and respect our family members' privacy.*

## Dan's Story

Dan never imagined that he would end up homeless, but then the pandemic hit, stripping him of a job, a home, and a relationship.

"I've been a cook for over 25 years, cooks can always get work," he said over a hot lunch in the Our Place dining hall. "Or so I thought. But COVID shut down half the restaurants, and one thing led to another. I can't afford much for food anymore, I'm not getting any younger and there's nowhere for me to go to cook my own food. So here I am."

After he lost his job, Dan quickly ran through what little savings he had. "I was living paycheque to paycheque," he said. "But isn't everybody?"

When he lost his apartment, he also lost his girlfriend. Unemployed, she moved

back to Vancouver to live with family. He found himself alone, and now facing homelessness for the first time.

"It's been the craziest year of my life," he said. "When they shut everything down, it all happened so fast, I didn't know what to do. I didn't have anywhere to go."

Distraught, Dan lined up for a shelter mat.

Each night, he escapes there from the wet, cold weather that is beyond overwhelming.

He was relieved to hear that the Our Place Drop-in Centre on Pandora was open too. "I came for the meals and a chance to get inside, maybe talk to someone," he said. "But then I discovered the showers, free socks and

clean dry clothes, and the computer lab. One of the outreach workers also told me about the employment program, Our WorkPlace, so I'm heading over there next. These guys really seem to want to help me. Maybe my luck is changing for the better."

"There are some real kind souls around here," he said. "I got chatting with Joe who does smudging and First Nations stuff in the courtyard, and it helps. I've never really thought about spirituality before, you know? But there is something calming in the way he brushes those demons off your shoulder. It's like a fresh start."

*Dan came in for a meal... and left with so much more. He found a place where he felt warm and welcome for the first time in months. And it's your generosity that makes this possible – **you help nourish this change.***

**"But COVID shut down half the restaurants, and one thing led to another... So here I am."**



## Jordan's Story

Ever since he was a teenager, Jordan Cooper has been working on the frontlines of poverty, homelessness, addiction, and the unpredictability of severe mental illness.

With no other place to go, especially in this uncertain time of COVID, the people who huddle on the sidewalks and boulevards in front of Our Place on Pandora and around the city can be easy to dismiss as beyond our caring and compassion. Far too often we shift our gaze in the other direction and make negative assumptions about them – that son, that sister, that father or that grandmother.

But to Jordan, they are family. They're our family. He has worked, laughed, cried, fed, even bathed many of them for over a decade.

He has also attended far too many memorial services because, sadly, that is life on the street: volatile, dangerous, stressful and, ultimately, short.

Starting out by helping his dad at the Open Door (Our Place's founding society), Jordan quickly discovered his calling. His intrinsic empathy and natural leadership quickly saw him work his way up the ranks to Director of Services at Our Place. And in this time of pandemic, leadership is badly needed as this health crisis is like nothing we've ever seen before.



Jordan helps to look after family members' belongings, stored safely in our downtown storage shed.

*We served takeout meals for our family members until we were able to open our doors again, thanks to donors and sponsors.*



"Normally at times of crisis, we rally together," says Jordan. "We're rallying again, but we have to step carefully now. We need to keep both the family members we serve and our staff safe, which means following all protocols while still being a resource that people can rely upon."

To that end, Jordan and his staff have been serving hundreds of meals per day from the Our Place kitchen to those in need.

The team is also doing constant check-ins on people's health, both physically and mentally.

A very welcome feature of our Drop-in Centre has been the hiring of Paramedic/Outreach workers who are able to treat family members' health needs (wound care, etc.) while assessing if they have COVID symptoms and/or need to visit the hospital for further assessment. But with care on-site, the paramedics help keep

hospital visits to a minimum.

"We were able to do that because of funding during the pandemic, and we are so grateful because it is such a tremendous support that we hope will carry on in future."

Jordan's smile widens when he talks about Our Place when he was finally able to re-open its showers in the summer and fall, with the assistance of private donors and the City of Victoria staff. "Hundreds of people got to have a long, hot shower for the first time in weeks," he says. "And we were as relieved as them because this is what we do, we provide hope, safety, nourishment, and hygiene. It's in our DNA."

***The change we see in people, the re-ignition of that inner light, is palpable. Please help us nourish change with your gift today.***