

Annual Report (2019-2020)

HELPING SPIRIT LODGE SOCIETY (HLS)



Message from Executive Director



Greetings Everyone! My name is Olivia Jim, Executive Director for Helping Spirit Lodge Society, I belong to the Wet'suwet'En First Nation. I have worked for Helping Spirit Lodge Society for the past sixteen years and I have been in the leadership role since late 2016.

I acknowledge that our work takes place on the traditional, unceded territories of the Coast Salish peoples including the territories of the Musqueam, Squamish, Sto:lo and Tsleil Waututh Nations.

Helping Spirit Lodge Society provides emergency shelter and permanent housing support to women and children fleeing domestic violence and homeless individuals and families. I am excited to utilize what I have learned throughout the years to help our community and our families who reside in our safe spaces.

I am pleased to present our Annual Report for 2019/2020 fiscal year. I raise my hands up to all our Front-Line Workers, Groundskeeper/Maintenance Worker, Housing Workers, Youth Mentors, the Program Supervisors and the Chief Financial Officer for their continued hard work, commitment and dedication to offer the best services and support to our clients and partners through all our programs.

The first two quarters of 2020 have been very difficult and strange due to Covid-19 global pandemic which forced changes in our service delivery models. We have however, managed to keep our facilities open with some activities going on while taking extra precautionary measures to ensure the safety of our clients and staff.

Highlights - 2019/2020 Fiscal Year

- Spirit Lodge and Spirit Way have been running at full capacity this past year serving women and children fleeing domestic violence,
- The Annual Client Christmas celebration was an excellent turn out and without the donors this event would not be possible,
- Conducted Service Delivery Review for both Spirit way and Spirit Lodge,
- Strengthened our relationship with donors and expanded our funding portfolio,
- Undertaken Digital Marketing campaign to solicit extra funding to support our work.

I would like to conclude by thanking the Board of Directors for their continued support and guidance in ensuring that the organization is on track in attaining its mandate, mission and strategic goals.

Awet;Za ! (That's all for now— In Wet'suwt'en)

Respectfully,

Organization Background

Helping Spirit Lodge Society (HSLs) is a non-profit organization founded as a result of the community discussions and decisions made during community forums through 1990. The United Native Nations originally sponsored the first project and opened office for the society on February 1, 1990. The project received a conditional unit allocation from BC Housing and Management Commission on March 22, 1990 for the Spirit Lodge Transitional House. On August 4, 1990, HSLs became a registered non-profit charitable organization. The Spirit Lodge (First Stage Transition House) doors opened June 1, 1990.

The organization provides a wrap-around services in the urban Indigenous communities within the Metro Vancouver area to women and children fleeing domestic violence as well as individuals and families experiencing homelessness (chronical and episodic). Our currently active programs are outlined below.

- ❖ **First Stage Transition House (Spirit Lodge)** – offers temporary housing (for the maximum of 30 days) to women and children fleeing violence.
- ❖ **Second Stage Transition House (Spirit Way)** - provides therapeutic intervention/violence prevention programs throughout the term of 18 months to women and children fleeing domestic violence.
- ❖ **The Journey Home Program** – the housing first program which support individuals and families who are episodically and chronically homeless with long-term affordable and safe housing.
- ❖ **Kingsway Sierra** – the 36 mixed market units (subsidized and market price units), supported by the 10 commercial units on the first floor of the building.
- ❖ **COVID-19 Support** – this initiative is intended to support the clients especially the most vulnerable (elders, disabled, kids etc.) with household basic needs (e.g. Food, Grocery, Cleaning Material etc.) amid the current COVID-19 pandemic.

Helping Spirit Lodge Society is the leading Indigenous organization in the Lower Mainland committed to alleviate domestic violence against Indigenous women and children and reduce the homelessness problem especially among the Indigenous communities.

MISSION & VISION

The Vision and Mission of Helping Spirit Lodge Society are entrenched in the following statements:

- **To provide Safe, protective shelter to indigenous women and children,**
- **To provide support and advocacy to Indigenous peoples,**
- **To provide holistic educational programs of enhancement.**

Core Values

Helping Spirit Lodge Society embraces the following core values which shape the culture of the organization:

- Love
- Balance
- Respect
- Honesty
- Fairness
- Trustworthy
- Commitment

GOVERNANCE – BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The organization is governed by voluntary board of directors who have an overarching responsibility to ensure that the organization is led and managed in manner which is consistent with its core values, mandate, policies, and non-profit organizations regulations of British Columbia and Canada. The current members of HSLs board of directors are as follows:



**Doris
Peters**
-
President



**Tasneem
Razvi**
-
Vice President



**Lillian
Antelope**
-
Boad Member



**Adriana
Ruso**
-
Treasurer



**Renee
Aldana**
-
Secretary

ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

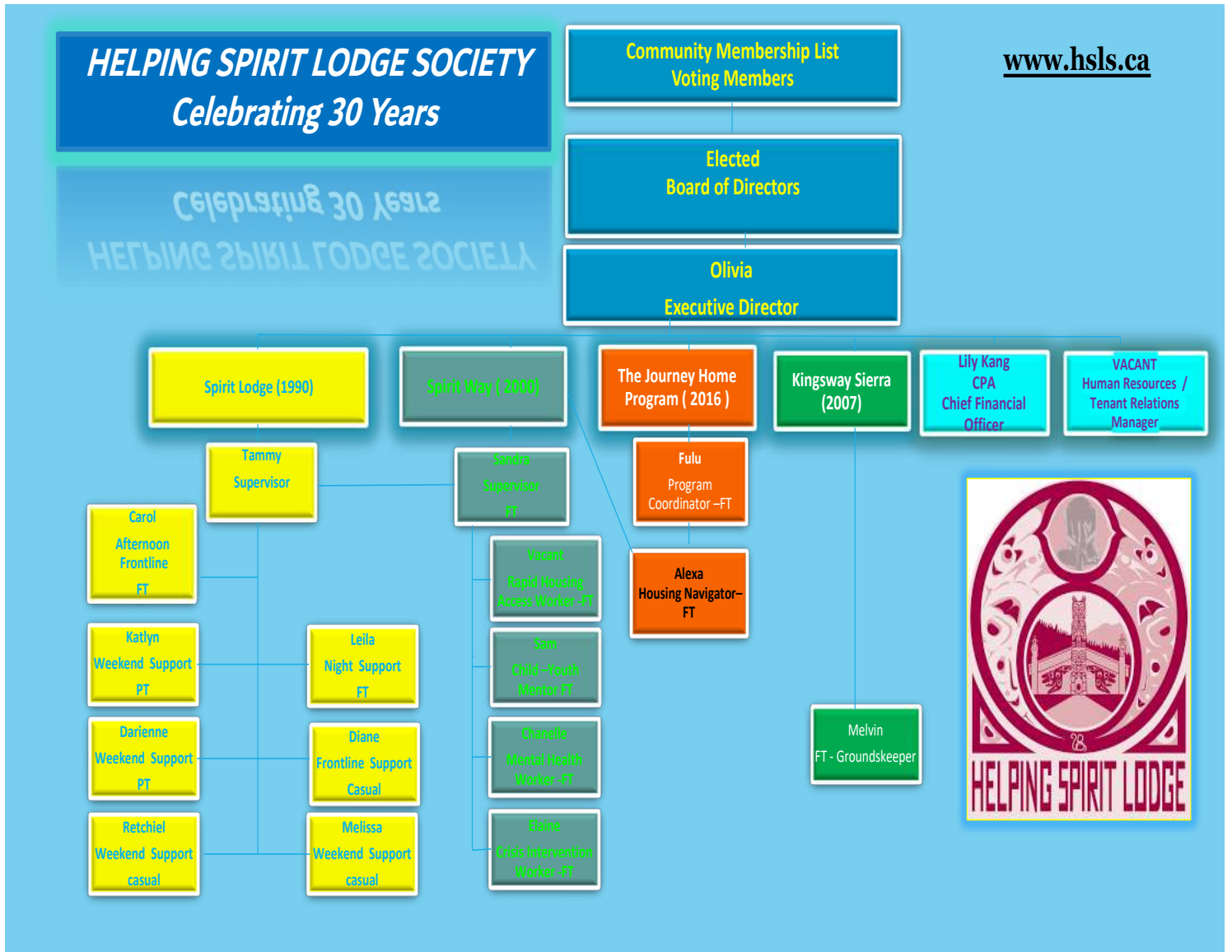


Figure 2: Staff Christmas Lunch

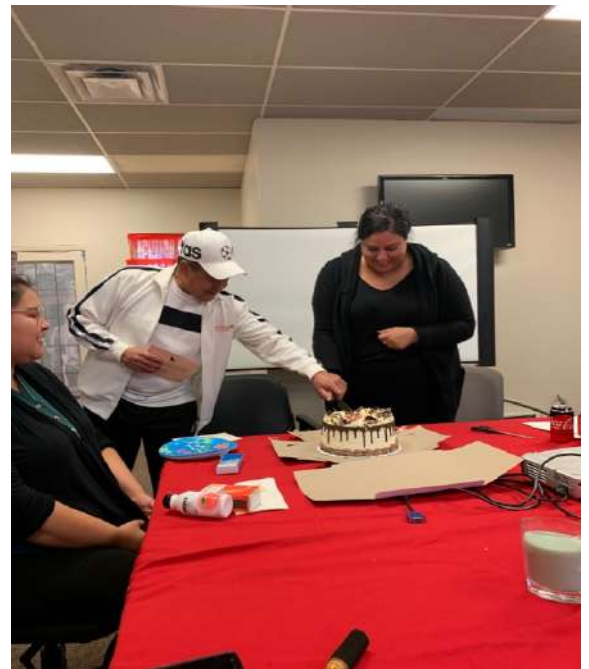


Figure 1: Staff Birthday Celebrations

PROGRAMS PERFORMANCE

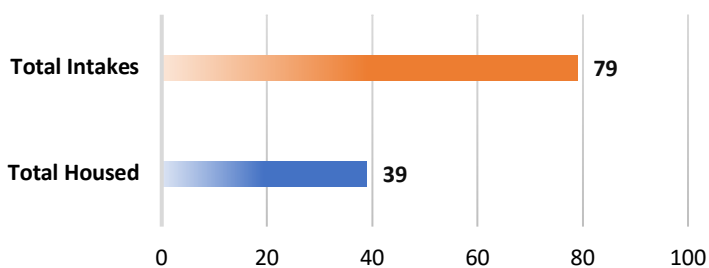
JOURNEY HOME PROGRAM

Journey Home Program provides housing support (i.e. first month rent, damage deposit and basic household items) to episodically and chronically homeless individuals and families throughout the Metro Vancouver area since 2014/2015 fiscal year. The program follows housing first model which advocates housing people first regardless of their housing readiness and then connect them with the resources which will help address their unique individual barriers or issues. The program is implemented in strong partnership with other non-profit housing organizations, shelters and transition houses mostly based in Vancouver down-town East Hastings area and it receives the funding support from Service Canada as part of Reaching Home Program implemented by the Federal Government.

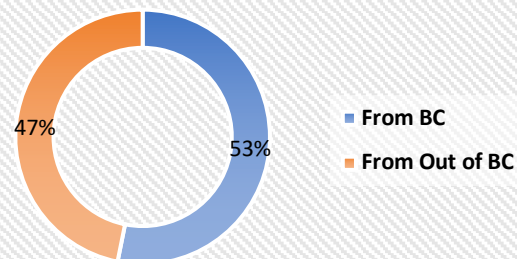
Overall, the Journey Home Program performed well for the fiscal year 2019/2020 and it was able to meet its intended annual targets ahead of time by 3 months. The retention rate for the people who were able to maintain their housing longer (at least for 1 year or more), was more than 80% which is impressive in addressing the escalating homelessness problem (according to Annual Homeless Count Survey) in Metro Vancouver area.

The overview of the program performance for 2019/2020 fiscal year is depicted by the charts below;

TOTAL INTAKES VS TOTAL HOUSED



CLIENTS PLACE OF ORIGIN - 2019/2020



Clients Gender Desperity - 2019/2020



SUCCESS STORIES

“Before meeting the Journey Home team from Helping Spirit Lodge Society, I was homeless and had very limited options. I am deeply grateful for the support and help (housing, clothes – through donations, food, grocery etc.) I received through the program up to this far. I am now happy and back to my normal life, working and even doing the volunteer work which I am passionate about.”

Patricia T.

“After a few unlucky breaks with my health and with my employer, I found myself homeless for the first time in my life at age 39. For quite a while, I was managing, but just barely. I couch-surfed, booked short-term rentals, and then even shorter-term rentals. Everything felt just out of reach. I tried my best to maintain a normal life. I remained employed, for the most part, of the two years I was without a home. However, I felt things fall away, one by one. I was perpetually exhausted. My anxiety and stress levels were through the roof.

Eventually, I was unable to work. I spend weeks on the streets, scraping by, until I found myself in a 30-day shelter. While there, I was finally able to rest. I had regular meals. I found a new job and I found about the Journey Home Program from Helping Spirit Society. Having never been on Social Assistance, I didn't have access to a lot of the services offered to those who are. I always felt I needed a little help, a little push, and Journey Home was that push for me. I was on the brink and they pushed me over to the other side.

They helped me secure a safe and comfortable apartment, furnish it, and provided me with groceries to get me started. Today, six months in, I finally have the comfort and security that I was desperately needing. This service was exactly what I needed as someone who was on the fringes but wanting to provide for myself and contribute to society. “

Thank you, Journey Home Program and the team.

Brock P.

SPIRIT LODGE - 1ST STAGE TRANSITION HOUSE

Spirit Lodge is the 10 bed - 1st stage transition house which provides temporary (up to 30 days) safe accommodation for women and children fleeing domestic violence. For the fiscal year, 2019/2020 the average occupancy rate of the Spirit Lodge house was 80%.

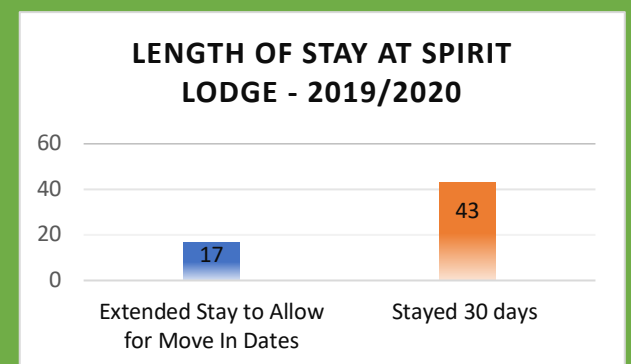
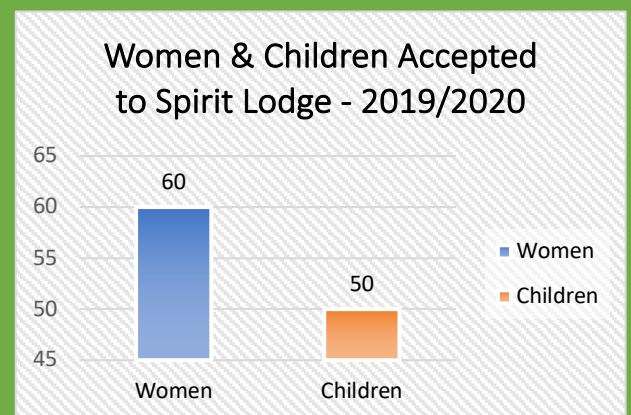
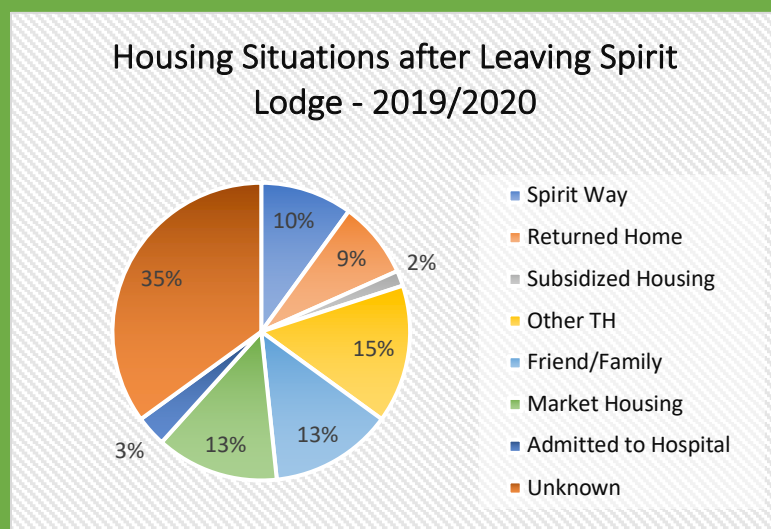
During their stay at Spirit Lodge, the women and children are linked to various support services with the purpose to help them get back on their feet post domestic violence experience. Some of the support services and donations utilised by the clients for the fiscal year 2019/2020 include the following:

LUSH (bar soap), TruLive eco Strips (laundry soap), TransLink Transit program, Foodbank, Pets Matter (provides temporary foster for pets), Reaching for the stars (set up to provide reading nook and books -Sandra). Some of the clients were further supported through internal programs like Journey Home Program which helps to covers their housing setup and moving costs.

During the 2019/2020 fiscal year, Spirit Lodge staff organized and celebrated various events with the clients (women and children) and those include:

- **Halloween** - the children who were in the house at Halloween time, did not have any costumes and were extremely sad, so the staff cut up sheets for them to be ghosts. They were the hit of the neighbourhood and came home with so many good experiences that night.
- **Harvest Feast** – the staff together with the clients celebrated Healthy Harvest or Autumn Harvest by giving thanks through a round table discussion.
- **Christmas** – all the clients (mothers and kids) were provided with their wish list items for Christmas celebration through donations solicited by the organization from different local businesses and individuals. This was a great success and it brought much joy to all the clients.

The summary performance of Spirit Lodge is depicted through the charts below.



SPIRIT WAY– 2ND STAGE TRANSITION HOUSE

Spirit Way is the 2nd Stage Transition house which houses women and children fleeing domestic violence for a maximum duration of 18 months. Spirit way building has a total of 14 units which ranges from 1 bedroom to 4 bedrooms. This transition house also offers a wide range of support services to both women and children with the purpose to help them heal from the trauma, depression, anxiety, mental issues etc. they might be going through as a result of domestic violence they experienced.



Figure 3: Spirit Way Staff at Work

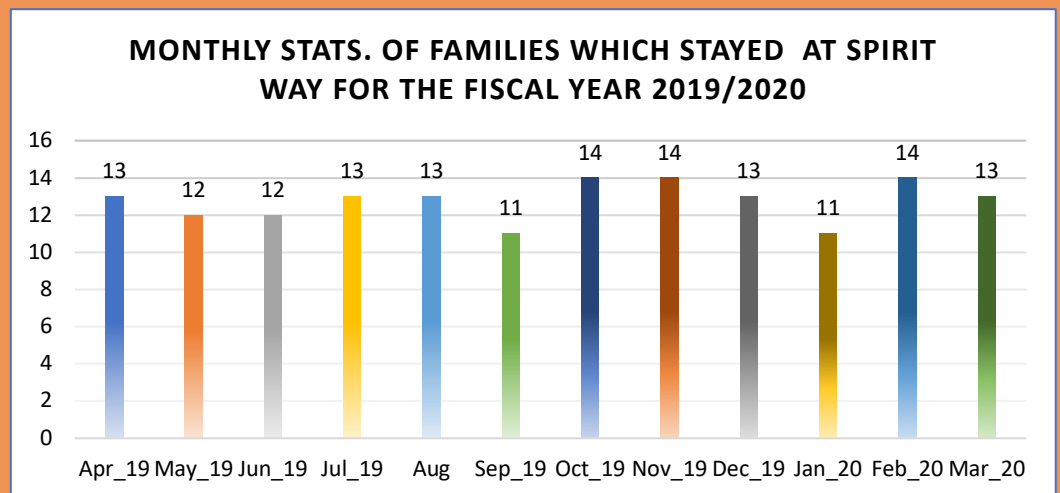
Some of the common services provided by Spirit Way working together with other partner organizations include; **Parenting, Community kitchen, WAVAW, Housing, Yoga, Life Skills, Cultural crafts, Family dinner, Monthly meetings, Massage, VACPC, Art Therapy, Food Bank etc.**

For the fiscal year 2019/2020, Spirit Way staff organized and celebrated multiple events with the clients (women and children) and those include;

- ❖ **Easter Dinner** – in April the staff had an Easter dinner for the families with Easter baskets for the Children and gift bags for our women.
- ❖ **Aboriginal Day** - in June the staff and clients celebrated Aboriginal day with a barbeque in the park for the families.
- ❖ **Christmas** - in December the staff celebrated Christmas with a dinner for all the families at Spirit Way.
- ❖ **Women’s Day** - in March the staff and clients celebrated Women’s Day with activities and a dinner for the families.

Spirit Way staff comprises of *Program Supervisor, Rapid Housing Access Worker, Intensive Case Management Worker, Crisis Intervention Worker, Youth Mentor, Child Minders and Housing Navigator*. The building operated with an average of 13 families per month for the fiscal year 2019/2020.

The performance outlook of Spirit Way for the fiscal year 2019/2020 is reflected through the chart below.



KINGSWAY SIERRA HOUSING

On February 28, 2007, The City of Vancouver invested \$6.6 million for the purchase of a 36 units rental apartment building at Kingsway and Dumfries Street and leased the building to Helping Spirit Lodge Society. Helping Spirit Lodge Society manages this building under the name Kingsway Sierra as a mixed Market Rental Housing, with the priority being to provide affordable housing to the most vulnerable which include Indigenous individuals and families who are at risk being homeless.

Throughout 2019/2020 fiscal year, we had 100% occupancy rate in 36 residential units of Kingsway Sierra building, and 9/10 occupancy rate in commercial units. The building has 16 subsidized units and 20 market rate rental units.

In May 2018, Aboriginal Housing Management Association (AHMA) approved HSLs Kingsway Sierra building envelope renewal project with a total budget of 2.5 Million. This project was scheduled to start early 2020 but it has since been delayed due to the current COVID-19 pandemic. The project scope for this renovation work will include: roofing, balconies, windows, doors, cladding and some interior upgrades.

We are looking forward to the building envelope project as it is highly prioritized and anticipated by the province.



Figure 5: Vacant Unit - Kingsway Sierra



Figure 4: Jasper - Kingsway Sierra Tenant

OUR RESPONSE TO COVID-19 PANDEMIC

During the last month of 2019/2020 fiscal year, Metro Vancouver and other cities around the country (Canada) experienced soaring numbers of the COVID-19 pandemic cases which resulted in economic lockdown as a measure to curb the spread of the virus. The economic shutdowns across the country impacted a lot of businesses and organizations negatively and forced most of them to adjust their normal way of working - Helping Spirit Lodge Society is not an exception.



As a precaution measure to contain the spread of corona virus among the staff, clients and other stakeholders, Helping Spirit Lodge Society management implemented a number of measures outlined below:

1. COVID-19 Informational Guidelines

HSLs management printed World Health Organization (WHO) recommended informational guidelines on how staff and the clients should conduct themselves (e.g. regular hand washing, physical distancing, the symptoms to look for etc.). The copies of these guidelines were then posted on the walls of the common areas (hallways) in all three locations of the organization (Kingsway Sierra, Spirit Lodge and Spirit Way).

2. Hand Sanitizer Dispenser

The hand sanitizer dispensers were procured and mounted by the main entrances of the three buildings of the organization for all the people (staff and clients) to sanitize their hands as they come in the office before meeting other people who are already in the building.

3. Face Masks & Hand Cloves

The recommended masks and hand cloves were purchased and distributed to the staff and clients as another measure to protect them from contracting or spreading the novel corona virus.



4. Working from Home (WFH)

Working from home option was introduced with only few people at the time in the office. This was done to enforce physical/social distancing which was issued as part of the guidelines by British Columbia Senior Public Health Officer.

5. Food & Groceries Distribution

The organization received funding from Indigenous Service Canada to support the clients who are negatively impacted (e.g. lost jobs, reduced income etc.) by COVID-19 to cope. Among other things, the organization utilised this funding to pay the rent for the clients who lost their jobs, procure regular deep cleaning services across all three locations, buy food and grocery parcels for all the clients, hire part time drivers for delivery of the food & grocery parcels etc. Distribution of food parcels received overwhelming appreciation from the clients as they indicated that it saves them from the stress of going to the grocery stores where they can easily get exposed to virus especially because most of them are living with some underlying health conditions (e.g. diabetes, high blood pressure, depression, mental conditions etc.).

6. Transition Houses Placed Under Lock Down

Both Spirit Way and Spirit Lodge were placed under lock down whereby the clients were not allowed to leave the building unless they have compelling reasons as per the recommendations from BC Housing. This measure was again introduced as an effort to protect the clients (children and moms fleeing domestic violence) from contracting the corona virus.

7. Suspension of in Person Meetings

All in-person meetings between the clients and the staff or among the staff across all the programs were moved to virtual option. Zoom Video Conferencing platform and phone calls were used for some of the activities which include; intake of the new clients, clients follow-ups/home visits, house meetings for clients and staff, management and coordination meetings and board meetings.

The above articulated preventative measures proved to have been effective thus far as the organization has not recorded any known single case of COVID-19 among its staff and clients.



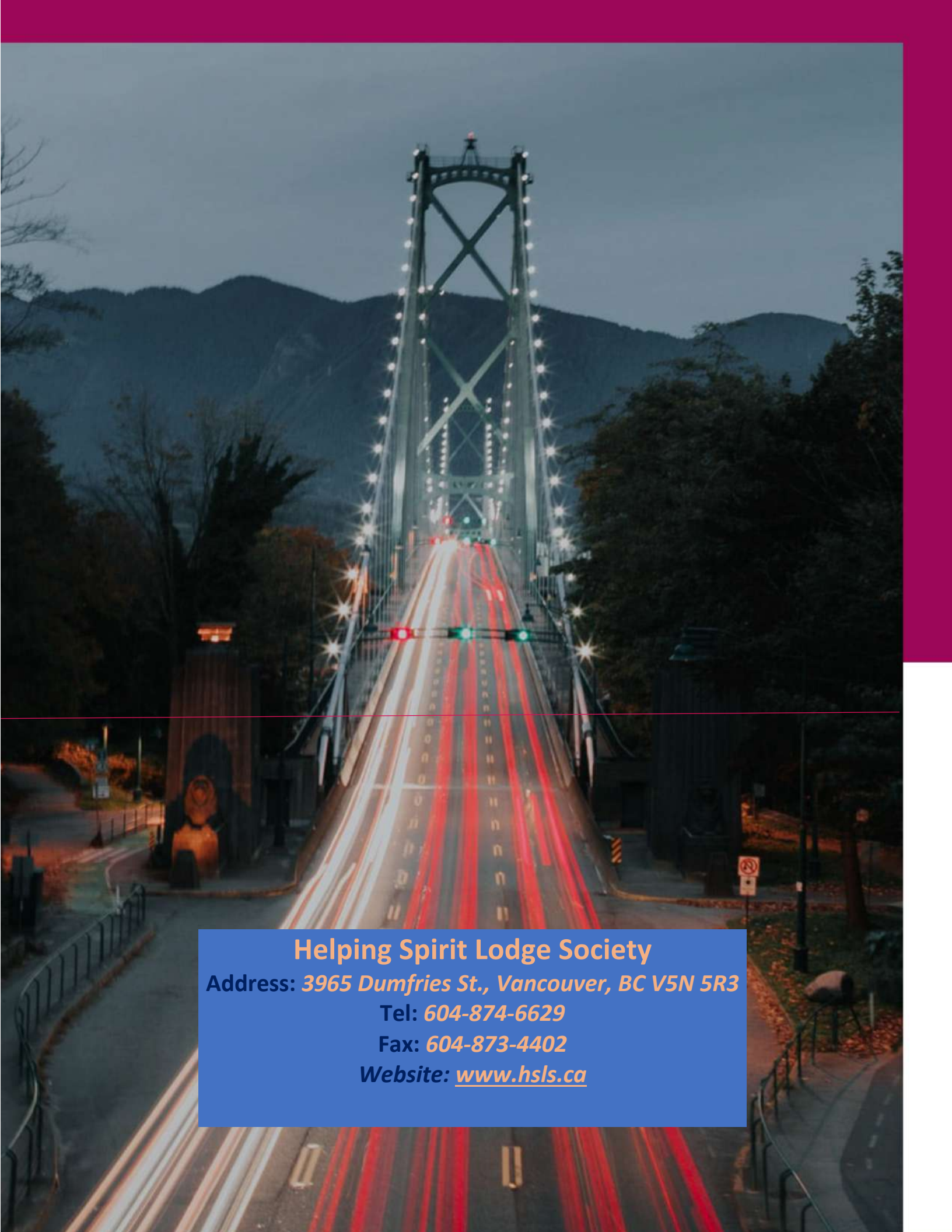
Financials



- ❖ The organization revenue for 2019/2020 fiscal year was \$4 million with the total expenses of **\$3.7 million**;
- ❖ The organization strives to provide financial information and reports accurately, transparently, timely, and efficiently;
- ❖ HSLs is further audited annually by an independent external auditor (ENNS & Company) in accordance with the Canadian Accounting and Finance Standards and Principles for not-for-profit organizations.

Funding & Partnership





Helping Spirit Lodge Society

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