

## Plan to End Houselessness Speaking notes

### Introduction

- Sunset United Affirming Circle
- Registered Social Worker in Private Practice
- Volunteer at Camp Hope and Warriors of Hope community Support
- Volunteer with the Interfaith Saturday Lunches

I'm grateful to be able to share the work being done at the grassroots level to serve our community and our Indigenous relations. What I share tonight is with utmost respect for the people I have met and whom learned from.

The work being done at the grassroots levels is attempting to fill the gaps related to underfunding of government programs and CBOs.

When I arrived at Camp one of those first Sundays, it was because I truly believed we had lost our collective humanity, and to a certain extent we have, but what was not lost was people's willingness to answer the call. People showed up day after day with items to help and the asking the question what do you need? There were days I could state specific items, there were days I said everything, we need everything, and there were days that in all honesty all could muster was I need you to call your city councillor, MLA and your MP.

One of the most important things about Camp, was people were seen, how they came to be there, or their sobriety was not a barrier to our support. The first question was what do you need? One of the things I noticed quite quickly was there was no hot coffee in the morning. People were cold and damp and there was nothing hot to drink. The Tim's delivered in the evening was cold. I figured I could solve that, and with the folx of Sunset United Church we did. We utilized the urn from

the church, people donated coffee and 2 of the large thermos carafes. We made it happen. There were days we made 4 100 cup urns per day depending on the amount of hot coffee that was dropped off. Next was the lack of breakfast, well, we could solve that too. With the big pots from the church, we were soon serving 75-100 people oatmeal every morning. I quickly realized that trust was earned through consistency of action. This was the lesson I shared with others as the group of interfaith leaders met to discuss how we could be of service post Camp. And while we did not have the human resources to host a warming centre, what we could do is offer a lunch. There was no meal program on Saturdays and this group is able to address that need. Thanks to the generosity of the folx at First Baptist we are able to have a consistent location. We have been able to bring together groups of congregations to supply and host a lunch each Saturday for the foreseeable future. This is not only about lunch, but a place to warm up, share fellowship with others, and meet people where they are at, with compassion and grace. As this is a grassroots endeavour, we are able to respond to needs as they are identified. People needed socks we found sock. People needed feminine hygiene products, we added that to the shopping list.

One of the repeated statements that has stayed with me, has been peoples' appreciation for the opportunity to do God's work. It reminds me of people coming to Camp to donate, thankful for the opportunity to give. People want to help, many people have extra to give, but they want their gifts to be meaningful and tangible and not to be wasted.

After Camp was decommissioned, we as a core group of volunteers remained committed to supporting those still needing support. Everyday the organizers had multiple requests for support. Earlier this year Warriors of Hope Community support was born.

“they seeks to inspire healthier communities through advocacy and support. We are an organization committed to trust and reconciliation where everyone is seen, heard, and valued”

While I respect the work of organizations in the community and understand the need for process and policy, what we need to remember moving forward is people experiencing houselessness and food insecurity don't need more forms to fill out and hoops to jump through. They need food in their tummies and a roof over their heads.

The day to day volunteer work I do is mainly related to food insecurity. There are so many hungry people.

There is a Grandma looking after her 10 grandchildren, they are growing children and there is never enough food.

There is a person fleeing DV when there is no shelter space available. As we all know, SIS only gives people enough for shelter, but not enough for food and other necessities.

We get food to people living in their cars and try to get them connected to housing resources.

This late winter with snow still on the ground, we responded to a couple living in a tent in south Regina. Food and extra blankets were given and the offer of a warmer location to spend the night.

I deliver bread donated for people in the community. When I arrive at, I see people I know from camp, still getting support from the folx. I applaud all those working to support folx in the community doing this work, but as a society we need to do better. Many days when I arrive it is standing room only. We need to replicate the feeling of safety and community. We need to create this energy in more spaces. This is the energy of the Warriors of Hope and the interfaith Saturday lunch gatherings. Its what the volunteers of both groups endeavor to bring to

the community. We need to include food security and harm reduction models if we are going to end houselessness in our community. We can't do one without the other.

We are always ready with cash in hand for the fun things (a stadium and a pool), for a temporary home for our furry friends, but now is the time to stand up as a community that also cares for the most vulnerable among us.

We are here tonight to answer humanity's call and for those of us who identify as Christian we are answering God's call to serve people who are in need. We need to embrace Jesus' radical love for all of his children and implore others in our community to do the same. Today and in the days moving forward we need to answer this call and understand that this may not be easy work, but it is the work our faith our humanity call us to do.