

WELCOME TO OUR NEWSLETTER

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Cover artwork by Meeko McDonald (*used with permission*)



STAYING CONNECTED

This newsletter is meant to communicate events, stories, updates, and developments at IJC. It is intended for the staff and participants of IJC, as well as the Board Directors, volunteers, Home Share providers, neighbours, donors, and friends who make up our community. We hope it will help you stay informed about what is happening at our organization and encourage connection across our programs and engagement in our initiatives. Thank you for being an integral part of IJC!

WHO WE ARE

Mission & Vision

Initiatives for Just Communities is a non-profit organization that is committed to restorative justice practices. IJC works to create communities where each person, particularly the stigmatized and the vulnerable, has a place to belong.

We walk with people with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder and intellectual disabilities, and those currently or previously incarcerated, to help them to achieve a better quality of life for themselves and their communities.



LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This newsletter was produced on Indigenous lands where IJC works alongside Indigenous and non-Indigenous families, staff, and communities. Our offices are located on Treaty 1 territory – the original lands of the Anishinaabeg, Ininew, Anishinew, Dakota, and Dene Peoples, and the homeland of the Métis Nation.



OUR PROGRAMS



Circles of Support & Accountability (CoSA)

CoSA supports individuals in Winnipeg with sexual offending histories who are integrating into the community after incarceration or serving probation or parole.



El'dad

El'dad supports adults with intellectual disabilities in the Eastman region. El'dad's programs include Residential, Home Share, Supported Cluster, Outreach, Day Programming, Drop-In, and an Alternative Justice Program.



Open Circle

Open Circle is a prison visitation program that matches trained volunteers with participants. Open Circle provides participants with nonjudgmental support and long-term connection.



Touchstone

Touchstone supports adults with intellectual disabilities in Winnipeg. Touchstone provides Outreach programming, Supported Independent Living, and Drop-In programming.

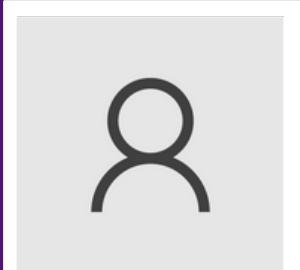
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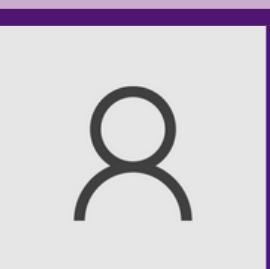
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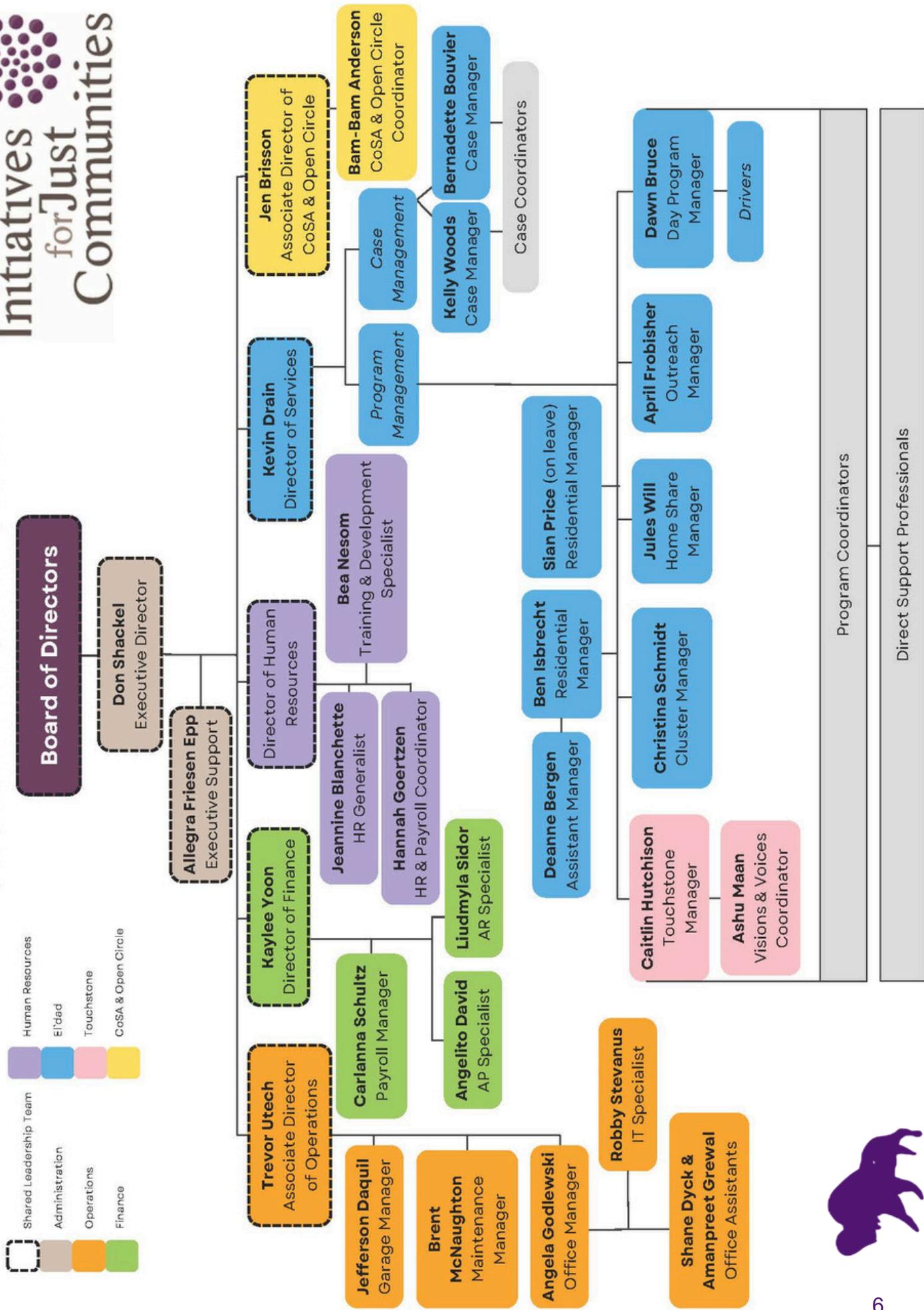
Jen Brisson
Assoc. Director of
CoSA & Open Circle



Allegra Friesen Epp
Executive Support
& Strategic Analyst

Initiatives for Just Communities

ORGANIZATION CHART



----- CURRENT PRIORITIES -----





CURRENT PROJECTS -----



CIRCLE OF CARE SUPPORT PLANS

IJC staff and participants are creating Circle of Care plans that address individual-specific needs across physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual dimensions. These plans, modeled after the Indigenous Medicine Wheel, reflect a holistic support system in which participants can achieve their personal goals.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

IJC is partnering with the University of Manitoba's Extended Education department to provide our Case and Program Coordinators and Managers the opportunity to take courses in Applied Counseling and Applied Management.



PARTNERING WITH MITT

IJC is working with Manitoba Institute for Trades and Technology to provide participants with vocational training and job readiness skills. Participants may also be eligible for courses in carpentry, culinary skills, and mechanics.

CURRENT PROJECTS CTD. -----



DROP-IN PROGRAMS



IJC now runs two Drop-In programs - one in Mitchell, and one in Winnipeg. These programs provide participants a welcoming, safe space to visit with their outreach worker or on their own. Participants have access to food, computers, clothing, books, as well as group activities like movie nights and cultural programming.

ADVOCATING FOR CLINICAL SERVICES

IJC is working with seven other CLdS-funded agencies in the Eastman Region to advocate for funding of clinical services in our programs. We want participants to have access to clinicians and specialists without facing lengthy commutes or long waitlists.



2SLGBTQIA+ INCLUSION

As part of our commitment to fostering a safe and welcoming community, IJC staff are completing training through the Rainbow Resource Centre. We are grateful to the RRC for providing 2SLGBTQ+ education and resources.

INDIGENOUS SUPPORTS & SERVICES



NEW SWEAT LODGE

IJC is committed to integrating Indigenous ways of knowing and being into our services. Indigenous perspectives and practices help inform culturally-relevant care that addresses all aspects of a person's lived experience - physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual.

IJC partners with elders to provide sharing circles, teachings, and cultural activities. Last year, we constructed a sweat lodge at El'dad Ranch, thanks to the leadership of our friend, Tim Barron Jr.

Over 80% of participants at IJC are First Nations or Métis. Through sweat lodge ceremonies and other cultural practices, these individuals have the opportunity to reconnect to their culture and reclaim who they are as Indigenous people.

PARTNERING WITH TIM BARRON JR.

Tim Barron Jr. is the founder and creator of Four Sacred Hearts, a grassroots Indigenous-led organization dedicated to healing from addictions, inter-generational trauma, and the impact of the residential school system.

Four Sacred Hearts works to reconnect Indigenous people with culture and community through compassion, mentorship, and the gift of the drum.



Sweat lodges are used by many First Nations to conduct ceremony. Sweats offer purification, cleansing, and healing. Outside the lodge, a firekeeper tends the sacred fire. Inside, participants sit in a circle. Grandfather rocks from the sacred fire are brought into the center of the circle. An elder leads singing and drumming as cedar water is poured on the Grandfathers, creating a cleansing steam in the lodge.

FEATURE STORY



Experiencing a Sweat Lodge

Excerpts from a conversation between Holly Jonker (right) and Allegra Friesen Epp

Allegra: So why did you want to be part of the constructing of the sweat lodge?

Holly: Well it's funny, Dawn [staff], at the end of the day, [asked], "Are you okay if I go pick you up at 7:30 in the morning... to go get some willow?" And I'm like, yeah sure! I just like being in nature and watching the guys do that [gather willow]... And it was really wonderful because two eagles flew over us.

A: Really? While you were gathering the willow?

H: Yeah. It was pretty cool.

A: That's pretty important symbolism, isn't it?

H: Yeah. It means they're watching over us and making sure everything's okay.

H: I think having Tim and the guys [from Four Sacred Hearts] is a good thing. They seem like really good people. They also do stuff in the



city, I've seen on Facebook... I actually met one of the guys, Glen, at the retreat ["Sacred Beginnings"] in Beausejour.

A: Oh, you were at the retreat!

H: Yeah Tiffany took us to one day. And it was actually the day after my mom passed away. And I was sitting there and Glen goes, "Hey, what's your name?" And I said, "Holly." And he's like, "What's wrong? You look really down." And I said, "Well my mom passed away yesterday." And he goes, "Oh!" And he sang me a song. He smudged me. He really helped me, gave me a hug, and...

A: ...Wow, that's really special.

H: Yeah, they're really nice, Tim and his crew.

A: How do you think the sweat lodge might benefit IJC in the future?

H: It's a good thing because when people are struggling, we can just have a sweat and help them out, you know?

A: How do you think a sweat will help people?

H: To get their emotions and feelings out and to pray to the Creator. I think it's going to be a good thing for IJC. At my old program they had [a sweat lodge].

A: Oh yeah?

H: Yeah, Oshki-Giizhig had one that we went to. But I'd never seen it built before. So that was a really cool experience for me.

A: Anything else you'd like to say about the sweat lodge?

H: I just thought it was a really cool experience and I thank IJC for putting this together and helping us.

A: Yeah. And thanks to Tim and Four Sacred Hearts, too. It's really been generous of them to partner with us. Well, thank you Holly. I appreciate this so much.



Tim Barron Jr. and friends from Four Sacred Hearts construct the Sweat Lodge at El'dad Ranch (July 2024)

IJC'S COMMITTEES



Committees enhance IJC's programming and strive to embody IJC's values. Committees are comprised of staff and participants who meet regularly to share insights, plan events, and bring proposals to IJC's Shared Leadership Team. Want to join a Committee? Contact information below!



EVENTS COMMITTEE

[eventplanningcommittee](mailto:eventplanningcommittee@initiativesjc.org)
[@initiativesjc.org](mailto:eventplanningcommittee@initiativesjc.org)



SAFETY COMMITTEE

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TURTLE ISLAND TEACHINGS COMMITTEE

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DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION COMMITTEE

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FUNDRAISING COMMITTEE

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PARTICIPANT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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JOIN OUR COMMUNITY

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VOLUNTEER

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JOB OPENINGS

Visit our Website



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