



Nanaimo Branch of the Victoria Human Exchange Society

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I can't believe 2014 is half gone, we have been busy in Nanaimo so far this year. There have been many comings and goings, some good, some not so great. The grounds at both houses are amazing. At Esther's House they are growing some vegetables, some flowers and some beautiful roses. The neighbors have indicated the condition of the grounds at Esther's House has increased the property value on the block. Quite an improvement from where we first began. That being said, we are having a terrible year with rats on the south end of town... a bumper crop this year.

We have some concerns with the property owner at Esther's house, we are thinking we may need to start looking for a different house to move when our lease comes due in September. Our landlord at the Mary Gordon house is totally different. He is always willing to do whatever we need, and we have told him we will be replacing the railing around the deck as it is unsafe. The residents have agreed to do the work, I am scouting for free materials-- we can still afford free!

Over the past few months we have had some hard learning experiences. We had a suicide attempt-- one of our youngest tenants. Thank God he is much better now. It made us realize how important it is to maintain a relationship with extended family wherever possible. This tenant had been sending text messages to his Mom, indicating this was coming. When she was unable to reach him, she called me and I went and checked on him as everyone else was out at the time. I believe that human contact saved his life. The other recent issue was a fellow with mental health issues, coupled with a childhood of sexual abuse. This fellow was very intense, but due to fear. He was difficult to work with but I developed a rapport with him and we were able to come to an agreement; well that lasted about 6 hours. He is now gone.

We are always brainstorming to find ways to raise funds. One of our residents says he likes to work with wood and make things. So we talked about what we could do with that. I have several books on making wooden toys, and a scroll saw, sander, drill and other things we can use for this. I scouted out a whole box of books with more patterns and some wood. Now we wait for him to feel he is ready to start. I am not going to push him but will support him when he is ready. If we are able to get some built we can sell them around Christmas to help raise some funds for the house.

Our facilitators Rich & Tim are amazing. I am so proud of both of them. Rich is maintaining excellent marks at school and has been invited to go on the Tribal journey this year... a canoe trip, that will take him from Nanaimo to Bella Bella. He is very excited. Rich has become much closer to his Mom and they are working sobriety together. Tim is working less hours and spending more time with the residents. Tim just took his 2 year cake and had a BBQ to celebrate.

Working with these houses is a full time job and comes with some pretty awesome benefits. I get to meet a lot of people. I hear a lot of stories-- some end really well, most don't start very good. Just to know that I have played a part in helping some of these guys is very rewarding. I have a lot of friends in the residences. Even though some that have slipped back into addiction they stay in touch and I hope one day they will make the choice to be sober again. We can't drag them in but we can certainly support them while they are in our homes. Most only need to know someone cares. Debbie

Every Meeting of persons can be an Exchange of Life's Gifts – a Human Exchange.