

## IMPACT STORIES

Jacqui Wasacase



### MAKE THE CALL

Jacqui Wasacase, Rainbow Youth Executive Director

A few weeks after completing training with Caring Hearts, one of the Rainbow Youth participants sadly took her life. Executive Director Jacqui Wasacase reflects “the ability to know who to call for that extra support for staff and participants was vital”.

During challenging times, nonprofits that take initiative become success stories. Rainbow Youth Centre dedicated to engaging, educating and inspiring youth and families to lead their best lives has worked hard to proactively strategize their future. At the core of the Centre’s mission is to empower youth, family, community.

Rainbow Youth operates five cornerstone programs: Youth C.A.R.E. (Creating A Respectful Environment) providing front

line services to youth using a prevention-based approach focusing on well-being; Youth Skills providing interpersonal development and self-awareness services to youth; Road To Employment addressing academic, employment, and personal development of youth who have not completed a high school education and are experiencing barriers to employment; Young Parent Program investing in the healthy development of young children; and Kids First supporting parents and their children through home visiting, community engagement, childcare and early learning opportunities for children, and connecting families to community services and support networks.

“Trauma informed care and practice needs to be part of our first response in our daily lives as youth worker’s, family workers health workers and care providers. Also just as human being dealing with human beings. Caring Hearts is well known for just that. Care for humans.” Jacqui explained that during the pandemic mental health issues for program participants and their families, and also for staff were widespread.

Jacqui asserts that Caring Hearts enabled staff to “incorporate much of what we worked on not

just into our working lives with our participants– but our daily lives and interactions with each other”. Rainbow Youth has so many families who deal with grief daily. “It is good to have someone and some place to reach out for resources during a time of need is essential to the work we do”.

Jacqui’s advice to other organizations when they confront obstacles and need services is “make the call. The training provided is truly life changing. You will find that learning about and understanding trauma informed care and how to make this a part of your humanness is so important, just recognizing that everybody could have experienced trauma in their life helps to provide path forward in communication that will not retrigger trauma for someone – no matter who - partner, client, friend, colleagues.”

### TAKE CARE OF YOUR OWN SO THEY CAN TAKE CARE OF OTHERS

Sara Tiefenbach, Community School Coordinator, Bert Fox Community High School & Fort Qu’Appelle Elementary Community School, Prairie Valley School Division

As the Community School Coordinator for both the Bert

Fox Community High School and the Fort Qu'Appelle Elementary Community School in the Prairie Valley School Division, Sara Tiefenbach sought support from Caring Hearts as school staff members were voicing significant concerns about their own mental wellness. It is not surprising as they had to adapt to added responsibilities, unexpected conditions and teaching in unprecedented ways while continuing to establish connections with students, families, and their colleagues.

Stress and burnout have been high throughout these tumultuous pandemic times. As Sara explains "We wanted to ensure staff had the tools to take care of themselves so they can be the best version of themselves. This was an opportunity to ensure staff were heard and validated."

The Prairie Valley School Division is a rural school division serving 39 schools. Sara who supports both schools in the town of Fort Qu'Appelle, is part of a dedicated team of professionals who are committed to improving learning opportunities and outcomes for children and youth. "As the Bert Fox Community High School motto says, "Think, believe, become". We "think" that Bert Fox is a great place to learn, we "believe" in one

another, and we work to create a learning environment where everyone will "become" all they can be."

Sara describes the most valuable part of her connection with Caring Hearts as "the support, resources, open communication and the willingness to adapt the supports/ education materials to meet the specific needs of our staff." She also notes that "Staff were validated - they were heard. This learning opportunity was personal rather than professional; which I strongly believe is a requirement to ensure staff remain healthy.

We have to take care of our own so they can take care of others." School staff now have a "tool kit" to increase their own resiliency to assist them in managing stress and secondary trauma.

Sara's advice for other organizations when they confront obstacles and need services is "Do not wait until your staff are at rock bottom. Validate staff by recognizing their needs and working with them to determine what supports they need to be the best they can be. Utilize these supports and resources as a prevention tool rather than a reactive tool."

## ONLINE SERVICES AND SUPPORTS

In 2020/21, Caring Hearts launched a series of online programs to respond to the needs in the community. This past year we continued to offer online group counselling, webinars, and education sessions and will maintain those program options to extend our services across the province.

## HOPE AND GUIDANCE - GROUP COUNSELLING

Bereavement is a major life stressor. The death of a loved one can have a tremendous impact on the lives of those left behind. There is no timeline for grief and one's experience can be affected by a variety of factors, including whether the bereaved has a support system in place. The journey through grief is different for each person. With understanding and support, most people can resolve their feelings and make some sense of their experience over time.

Group counselling can be helpful for those who find solace in the reciprocal sharing of thoughts and feelings and can be essential to the healing process for many. For many individuals, group therapy can be more beneficial than individual counselling. While it is true that

## EDUCATION & SUPPORT

everyone is unique and may have unique circumstances with their grief and loss, group counselling serves as a reminder that no one is alone in their struggles.

Our organization exists to ensure individuals, families, and communities have access to resources and additional supports during their journey of grief. In a group setting, members are invited to share stories openly without judgement, develop skills to help cope with their grief, and build their own network of supports in our community.

Being with those who understand the nature of our loss can bring us healing and comfort. Together we create a circle of hope – a safe place where we can begin to heal. The Adult Grief groups run for six to eight weeks and are facilitated by a licensed counsellor. In 2021/22 Caring Hearts offered 19 groups to 150 participants:

- Grief and Loss Support Group - Six Weeks (2 online groups)
- Healing After Suicide Loss Support Group Six Weeks (2 face-to-face and 1 online)
- Hope for the Holidays Grief Support Group Six-week (1 online)
- Conversations about Grief and Loss Peer Support Group (2 online)
- Anticipatory Loss Group (1 online)
- Sharing Circle (1 face-to-face group)
- Narrative Therapy Grief and Loss Group (1 face-to-face group)
- Yoga for Grief (2 face-to-face groups)
- Summer Children's Grief Groups (5)
- Caring Hearts Camp (2)

## OUR RESOURCES

### MANUALS AVAILABLE:

1. Being Trauma Informed and Providing Trauma Informed Care
2. Surviving Trauma
3. Supporting Families of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and Other Missing Persons
4. Managing Life While a Loved One is Missing
5. Practicing Self-care and Living in Wellness
6. A Guide to Traditional Healing
7. Adult Grief Workbook
8. Children's Grief book
9. Development of a Support Group for Families of Missing and Murdered Persons