



2020  
ANNUAL REPORT

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## Mission



**Supporting women and gender diverse people who are involved or at risk of becoming involved in the criminal justice system**

**Coverdale exists to provide** a continuum of care that acknowledges and addresses the needs of women and trans people in our communities that have come into contact with law. We aim to contact persons experiencing the justice system, to be present at the courts each day (Halifax/Dartmouth/Mental Health/Youth), to provide information, legal navigation and emotional support during the court process, to visit the federal and provincial institutions, providing counselling, programs, information and assistance in release planning. Our services promote self-esteem, self-awareness and inner strength for personal healing, growth and change and seek to lower the incidence of crime involvement through education and prevention programs that address the pathways to criminalization.





## Agenda

**Coverdale Court work Society  
Annual General Meeting  
Monday, March 15, 2021 7:00-8:30 PM  
Virtual Meeting on Zoom**

Land Acknowledgement  
Welcome and Introduction of Board Members  
Adoption of the Agenda  
Adoption of Minutes of 2020 AGM  
Business arising from the minutes  
Presentation of ED Report  
Presentation of Chairperson  
Presentation of Nominations for Board of Directors 2021  
Presentation of Financial Report for 2020  
Appointment of Accountants  
New Business  
Adjournment



## 2020 Annual General Meeting Minutes

**In Attendance:** Janis Aitken, Ashley Avery, Monica Bell-Ekanem, Carbo Kwan, Vanessa Lilly, Danielle Macdonald, Valerie MacDonald, Carrie MacInnis, Suzanne Marineau, Kathy McKay, Tami Meredith, Roberta Morrison, Hilary Murphy, Kathy Peach, Emma Pink, Brittany Sutherland, Ida Whitehouse

**Regrets:** Mirinda Bray, Maha Raghavan and Anna Sadofsky

**Recorder:** Brittany Sutherland

**Welcomes and Introduction of Board Members – Ida Whitehouse**

**Adoption of Minutes of 2019 Annual General Meeting – pending correction to spelling of Janis Aitken’s last name**

Motion – Brittany Sutherland, Seconded – Janis Aitken, Approved by all who attended the AGM last year

**Presentation of Chairperson’s/Executive Director’s Report – Ida Whitehouse**

Strategic Planning Retreat: shift in organization’s culture, set goals for the organization for the next three years, being a more inclusive organization (changing the language used on our website, posters, presentations etc.), increase in funding prospects, advocating for change.

Purse Project (Fundraiser): purses filled with essential items (donations from the community) for people coming out of jail

**Approval of the Reports**

Motion – Emma Pink, seconded – Monica Bell-Ekanem Motion Carried

**Appointment of Auditors – Sutherland Watts Accounting Firm**

Report was not completed at the time of the AGM.

**Presentation of Financial Report for 2019-**

Final financial report will be sent out to everyone who attended the AGM where approval of the report will be done via email

**Nomination Report**

Re-appointment of all members and officers of the board with exception of Kathy McKay and Maha Raghavan who have both resigned.

Signing Officers:

Chair – Ida Whitehouse

Vice Chair – Val MacDonald

Moved – Janis Aitken, Seconded – Tami Meredith Motion carried

Secretary – Brittany Sutherland

Moved – Hilary Murphy, Seconded – Kathy McKay Motion carried

**Nomination of new members:**

Monica Bell-Ekanem, Danielle MacDonald, Carrie MacInnis, Tami Meredith, Suzanne Marineau and Emma Pink

–

Motion – Janis Aitken, Seconded – Val Macdonald Motion carried

**New Business**

Vote on Financial Report when we get it through email with an AYE or NAY

Roberta Morrison shared a very inspirational letter “To Whom it May Concern”

**Adjournment – Motion Vanessa Lilly**





## Message from the Board Chair

The coming of the Coronavirus Pandemic in 2020 rocked the whole world. It was particularly difficult for those who were homeless, jobless, and marginalized. That describes many of the folks who we, at Coverdale, are privileged to serve. In the midst of the pandemic, the Board of Coverdale Courtwork Society was concerned that our ED, Ashley Avery, and her staff might not be able to assist our clients in the manner that we had previously enjoyed. Much of Coverdale's work is hands on and being physically present in one-on-one client meetings, with our clients in court, or small group programming.

There were many challenges and changes that the Coverdale Society faced. How could The Board support our staff with their need to have access to their cliental with the different lockdowns that were occurring? How could we move forward to work in some areas of great need without normal financial resources in place? Could we physically move from our cramped office space into something more helpful? The Board and staff worked together to overcome many obstacles.

One need identified by both the Board and Ashley was for new office space. We were, despite Covid19, able to move into new office space. We were grateful. A more pressing need was for a local "Bail House". Unfortunately, partnership with government and finances/ resources was problematic. However, because of the pandemic concerns in the jails, the Government was looking for alternatives for those who were there on remand. Through the cooperative efforts of E-Fry, John Howard Society and our Coverdale Courtwork Society, Ashley applied for and received grants to allow clients to be supported outside the jail for a period of approximately 3-6 months. It was very rewarding!

There was also a greater awareness by government and foundations of the needs of those who live on the fringes of society. Both had money ear-marked to address some basic needs of those who were financially or emotionally disadvantaged and monies for staffing such-projects. Our ED was remarkable. She applied to every grant that was available and made the proposals very specific re immediate needs.

During this year, our staff increased from 2 to 8 and our designated income almost tripled. Our staff, as of December.2020 consisted of Ashley, Bria, Hilary, Martha, Mirinda, Roberta, Sara & Stephanie. As a Board, we were pleased to bring salaries up to equitable line and living

wage. Our staff was complimented by seven student interns and one volunteer. As well, this year we said a reluctant goodbye to Kathy Peach after more than 10 years as our bookkeeper. However, Arlene Seto joined us as our new bookkeeper in July and was very helpful in our more complex Pandemic bookkeeping.

This past year has been a time of great change and The Board is very grateful for the creative ways that our ED, Ashley Avery and her staff were able to navigate any obstacles and moved the work forward in ways we could never have imagined. Technology helped us to connect through phone, Zoom, and emails. Board meetings, committee meetings, staff meetings, individual and small group sessions, our networking partnerships and even communicating with the Court systems was all done digitally. Was it ideal? NO. However, through financial aid provided through grants and donations, the staff were able to assist many of our clients with phones, paid phone minutes, computers, etc. so that they, too, could stay connected.

We, as a Board, are very appreciative of the hard work of our staff. We are grateful for the leadership and faithfulness of our ED, Ashley. She has been visionary, taken on more and more initiatives and responsibilities during the year and has shown wisdom in guiding this process with her staff. Never, in our wildest dreams, would we have thought that we would have more resources than ever to work with during this exceedingly difficult year!

Personally, I have been grateful to work with our Board who have been faithful in overseeing the work of the Coverdale Courtwork Society as well as being on sub-committees of Policy, Fundraising and Human Resources. Please note the list of our Board members who generously gave of their time and expertise. Early in 2020, we noted that we were not as diverse a Board as we wanted to be. Active recruiting resulted in a more inclusive Board and one with added skill sets. A special shout-out to Val Macdonald, our Vice Chair for her wise counsel and my partner behind the scenes.

This has been a stressful year with many challenges but there has been a wonderful silver lining as we have been able to reach more people and had greater resources with which to do it.

Take care and be Kind,

**Rev. Dr. Ida Armstrong-Whitehouse Chair**

# Message from the Executive Director

In 2020 Coverdale provided court support, bail support, emergency housing and programming to countless women and gender diverse people experiencing the criminal justice system in Nova Scotia. It is through this direct service delivery, that we create and advocate for access to justice—one of the most basic rights of democratic citizenship. Our combined services provide the paths required for women and gender diverse people to prevent, address and resolve the legal challenges and problems they face due to structural inequities in our society. The COVID-19 pandemic has intensified these inequities and have subsequently imposed unprecedented demands on community organizations like ours.

The women and gender diverse people that we serve are some of the most neglected, most forgotten, most stigmatized and most marginalized in our communities. When COVID-19 hit, as a community-based organization serving vulnerable people, we knew that our work was more essential than ever before and that we had to tune into the evolving needs of those we serve and stand on the frontlines to respond.

Nova Scotia's provincial prisoner population was reduced by 41 per cent between February and April — more than any other province. This was due to the extraordinary efforts of people from the courts, corrections and community who came together to protect this highly at-risk population. Coverdale was among the agencies working diligently to ensure the safe and successful release of women from jail.

With support from the Affordable Housing Association of Nova Scotia, temporary hotel spaces and 24-7 staffing was made available through a collaboration between Coverdale, The Elizabeth Fry Society of Mainland Nova Scotia, and The John Howard Society of Nova Scotia. The United Way Halifax also stepped up to fund this work. The initiative provided services to 55 people and the women's unit at the jail was down to just seven prisoners at one point.

In the fall, we launched two significant programs that respond to areas of considerable need in our province. Firstly, our Family Justice Project provides supports and services to women and mothers who are navigating the family courts through child protection and custody matters. The program also supports provincially incarcerated women and mothers and offers the Parenting Inside Out program—an innovative and evidence-based program for criminal justice involved mothers. The family justice project also aims to address the disproportionate

impact of the law on women who identify violence against them (particularly intimate partner abuse and sexual violence), but then find themselves facing criminal and other consequences.

Secondly, we launched a restorative justice program for youth called "Cultural Pathways". This program, funded by the Department of Justice Canada, provides culturally responsive supports, early intervention, prevention and programming to African Nova Scotian and Indigenous Youth who are involved or made to be at-risk of involvement in the criminal justice system. The systemic racism and inequality that Black and Indigenous people experience in this province is one of the most urgent access to justice crisis that exists. Our system of justice, from policing to courts to prisons and jails, has failed many members of our Black and Indigenous communities.

I wish to recognize the extraordinary work of our team of devoted staff. Hilary, Bria, Martha, Sara, Mirinda, Stephanie and Roberta. These individuals demonstrate integrity, empathy, resilience and passion on a daily basis and together, as a team, do remarkable work. I would be remiss without acknowledging the JEC staff, who geared up and ran to the frontlines during a global pandemic; Skylar, Martha, Mirinda, Katie, Sara and Gillian. Their work to support individuals exiting jail is commendable and won the Michael MacDonald Access to Justice Award in 2020.

This year presented enormous difficulties, yet the Board of Directors put their faith and trust in me and our team and did whatever was needed to support significant changes and growth. In particular, our faithful Chair Ida and Co-Chair Val have dedicated countless hours providing guidance, support, mentoring and leadership to me as E.D. We have a strong and diverse Board of Directors, and I am honoured and proud to work alongside them.

Our services are presently and will continue to be sought by women and marginalized groups who have been disproportionately affected by systemic issues. The pandemic has exacerbated these issues greatly. As this demand rises from vulnerable community members, the pressures on the non-profit sector will be sizeable. If there is one thing that we have demonstrated over the past year, however, it is that we are a resilient organization and our passion, commitment, and openness to evolve and be responsive to needs, will help us overcome any obstacles that we are faced with.

Sincerely,  
**Ashley Avery, Executive Director**

2020 Statistics

SUPPORTING  
WOMEN, TRANS  
& NON-BINARY  
INDIVIDUALS

COURT SUPPORT

1946



BAIL SUPPORT

86

PROGRAM SUPPORT

564



TELEPHONE CALLS

4489

\$20,000



Worth of groceries  
delivered to clients

175



Care packages  
delivered



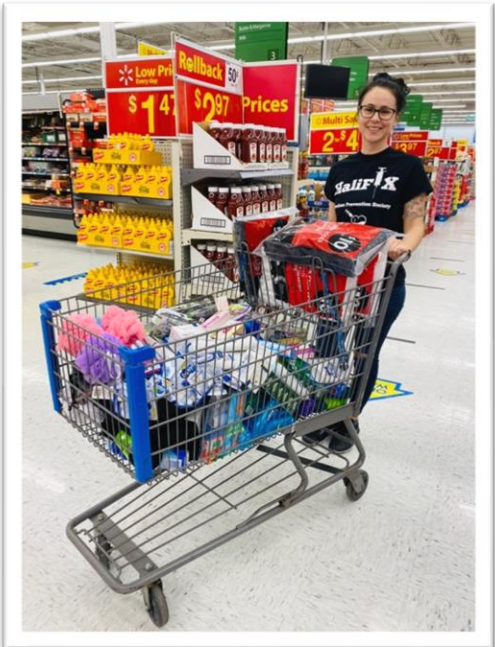
60

Cell phones  
provided

270



Nights of shelter in hotels





## Coverdale Staff 2020

Ash Avery	Executive Director
Bria Symonds	Cultural Path Coordinator
Gillian Morrisey	JEC – Client Support Worker
Hilary Murphy	Program Coordinator
Katie Scott	JEC – Client Support Worker
Martha Kerr	Outreach Coordinator
Mirinda Bray	Family Justice Coordinator
Roberta Morrison	Court Support Coordinator
Sara Tessier	Peer Mentor
Stephanie Cook	Administrative Assistant
Skylar Leblanc	JEC- Client Support Worker





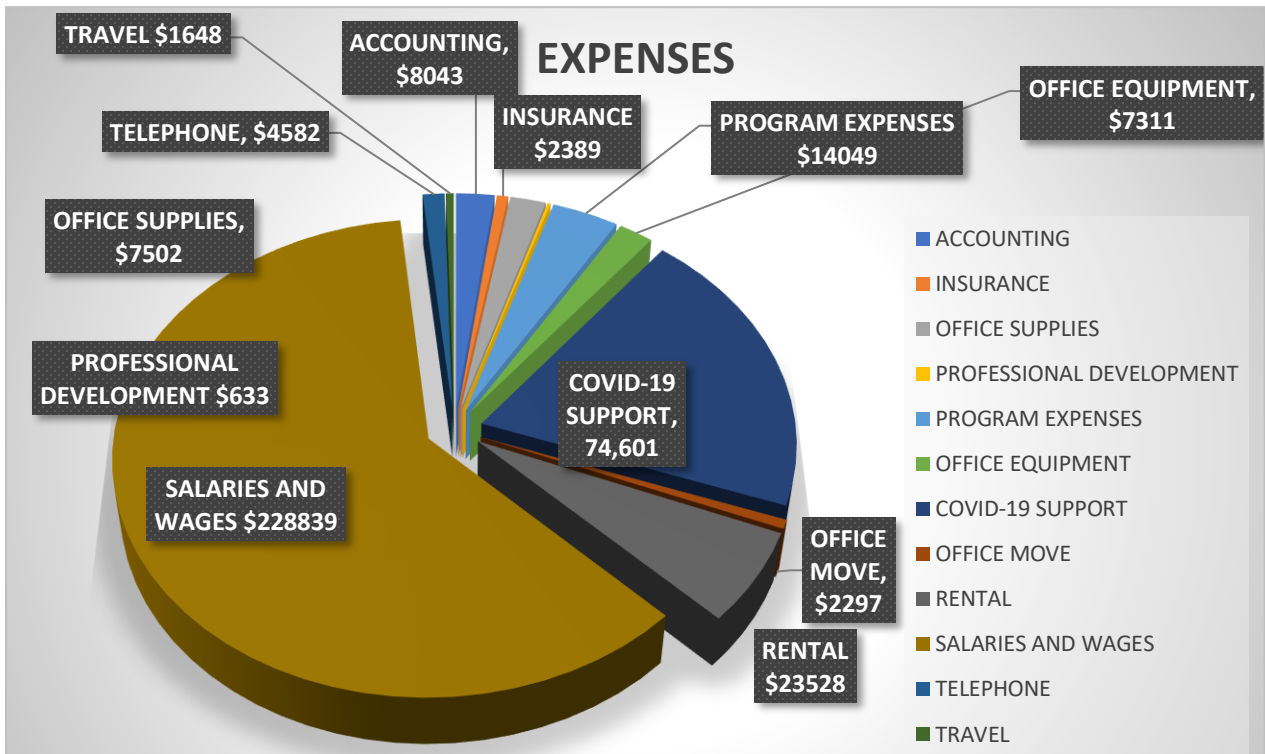
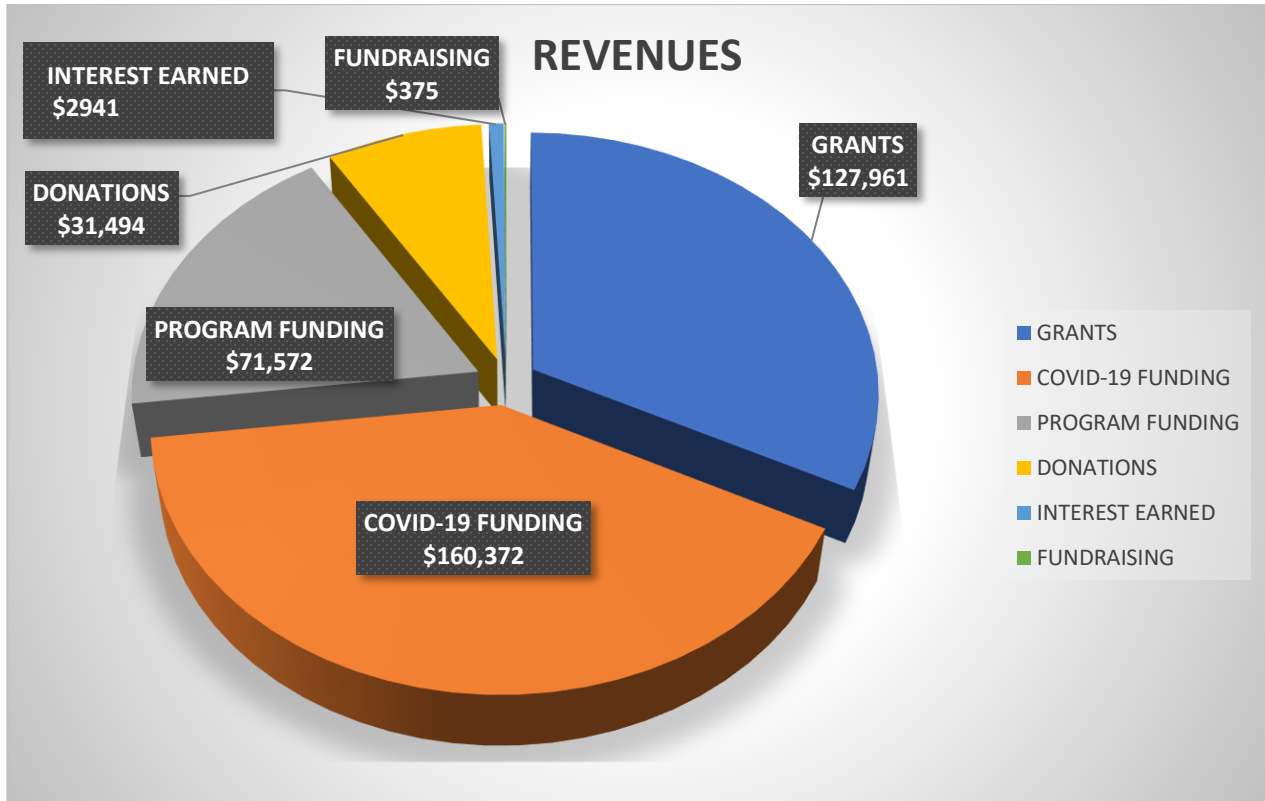
## 2020 Board of Directors

Rev. Dr. Ida Armstrong Whitehouse	Chair
Val Macdonald	Vice-Chair
Brittany Sutherland	Secretary
Vanessa Lilly	Director
Janis Aitken	Director (30+ years)
Carrie McInnis	Director
Carbo Kwan	Director
Danielle J MacDonald	Director
Emma Pink	Director
Anna Sadofsky	Director
Suzanne Marineau	Director
Monica Bell-Ekanem	Director
Dr. Tami Meredith	Director

## Student Placements & Volunteers

Rachelle Skinner	Dalhousie School of Social Work
Freyja Beattie	NSCC- Social Service Work
Monica Whitney Brown	Schulich School of Law
Claire Jansen Fought	Dalhousie University / Kings College
Anna Aguayo	Dalhousie School of Social Work
Heather Lawson	Schulich School of Law
Sophie Fiddes	Schulich School of Law

## Financial Summary



<b>COURT SUPPORT</b>	<b>BAIL SUPPORT</b>	<b>PROGRAMMING</b>	<b>ADVOCACY</b>
<b>Adult Court</b> Dartmouth Criminal Docket  Halifax Criminal Docket  Transportation  Applications  Information  Access to Technology  Letters of Support  Advocacy & Support	<b>Release Planning</b> Bail Planning  Court Testimony  Liaising with courts/jail/lawyer  Meeting with clients in custody  Transportation  Food / Groceries Technology	<b>Adult Programs</b> Beyond Trauma  Healthy Relationships  Healing through Recovery  Grief and Loss	<b>Committees</b> TESS – African Nova Scotian Advisory  TESS 2SLGBTQ+ Advisory  Bail Verification and Supervision & Supportive Housing Small Working Group  Metro Inter-agency roundtable on family violence  Virtual Court Small working group  Police Charging and Release Practices
<b>Youth Court</b> For African Nova Scotian and Indigenous girls  Information  Resources  Advocacy & Support	<b>Emergency Reintegrative Housing</b> Hotel Support	<b>Youth Programs</b> Voices  Love is not Abuse  Girls and Culture	<b>Research</b> LGBTQ+ Experiences in Jail  Remand and Bail  Housing and Incarceration Intersections  Court Statistics
<b>Family Court</b> Mothers/Parents  Information  Resources  Court Reminders  Advocacy & Support	<b>Case Management</b> Collaborative case conferencing  Referrals  Restorative Justice Circles	<b>Family Programs</b> Parenting Inside Out  Mothers Support Group	<b>Presentations</b> Understanding Your Rights  Wellness Within Conference  NSCC

## Services and Supports



# Community Care During COVID-19

## Snapshots from the year

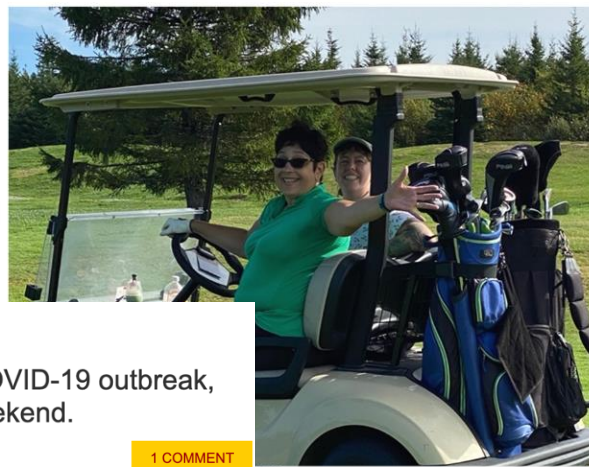


### Clearing out the jails

In an extraordinary effort to avoid a COVID-19 outbreak, many prisoners were released this weekend.

MARCH 24, 2020 BY EL JONES

1 COMMENT



### Government of Canada supports Halifax restorative justice initiatives

Français



### Successful program offering emergency housing for people released from jail may end because of lack of provincial support

By Sara Tessier - June 23, 2020

0



**ASHLEY AVERY & EMMA HALPERN:** Vulnerable women in Nova Scotia ending up on the streets or behind bars

### Successful program offering emergency housing for people released from jail may end because of lack of provincial support



## JEC – Transitional Housing Project

The COVID-19 pandemic posed a significant threat to incarcerated individuals. As people were being released from jail on bail, the significant gaps in housing and reintegrative supports became apparent. A new crisis emerged. Three community organizations came together with a proposal to try to meet the needs of this vulnerable population within the Halifax community. JEC operated as a collaborative transitional housing project between the John Howard Society of Nova Scotia, Elizabeth Fry Society of Mainland Nova Scotia and Coverdale Courtwork Society. The project was incredibly successful, supporting 55 people in total.



From left to right: Mirinda Bray (Coverdale), Ash Avery (Coverdale), Matt Bonn (Harm Reduction), Sara Tessier (Peer Support), Emma Halpern (Efr), Gillian Morrisey (John Howard), Matt Burt (John Howard), Leisha Seymour (John Howard), Skylar Leblanc (JEC), Katie Scott (JEC), Adrienne MacDonald (John Howard). Location: Homewood Suites in Halifax.



Mirror Image Media interviewing Sara Tessier for the United Way Halifax's video about JEC.



Clients served

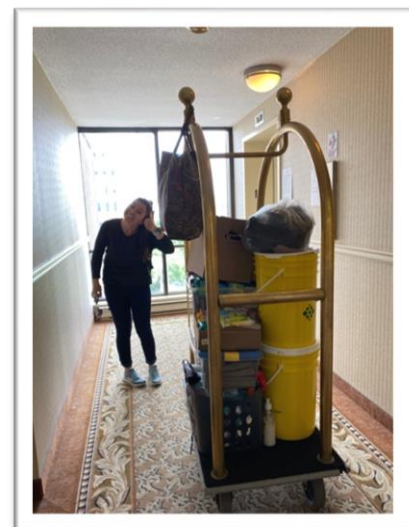


Men

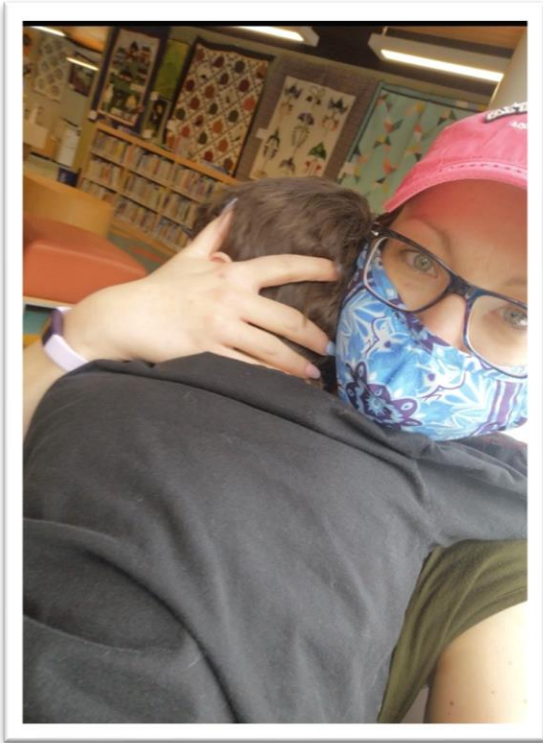


Women

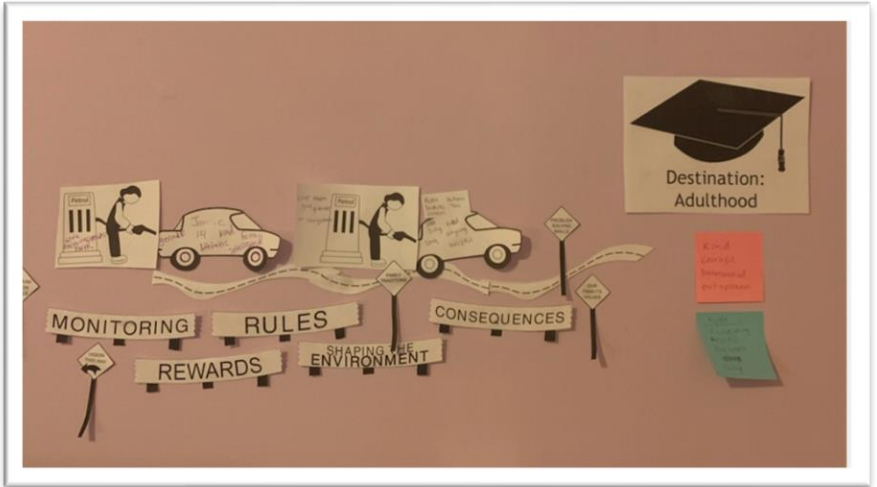
Gillian Morrisey moving out our staff office at the Atlantic Hotel at the end of the JEC project.



# Family Justice



The Family Justice Program provides court support, legal system navigation, parenting programs, visitation support, advocacy, safety planning, case management and special intervention to mothers who are navigating the family courts through child protection and custody matters.



A mother is reconnected with her son with the support of the Family Justice Program.



12

Women supported in Family Court

Women in PIO program



The *Parenting Inside Out*® program is an evidence-based parenting skills training program developed for criminal justice involved parents. The prison parenting program is appropriate for both incarcerated mothers and incarcerated fathers who are parenting from prison. The community version is appropriate for parents on parole or probation. As part of a reentry program, *Parenting Inside Out* has a proven impact on reducing recidivism and criminal behavior while improving family relationships and parenting skills.

27

Mothers Supported



Child Protection Support



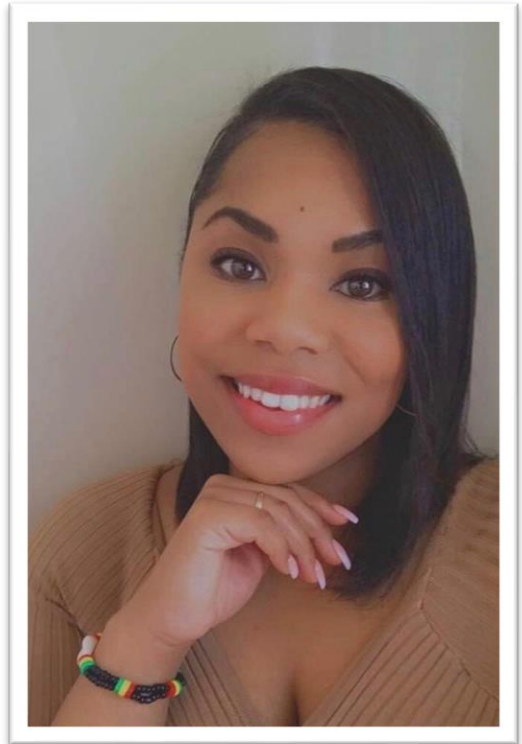


# Cultural Pathways – Youth Justice

The Cultural Pathways Program provides comprehensive and collaborative services and supports to African Nova Scotian and Indigenous young people charged under the Youth Criminal Justice Act and early intervention and prevention programming to Black and Indigenous youth.

The program employs an approach that focuses on key areas; mental health, education and employment, addictions, history of trauma and violence, racism, familial supports, mentoring and social isolation reduction.

By employing a restorative and holistic approach to working with youth, we prepare youth for the future and give them real opportunity to experience their full potential.

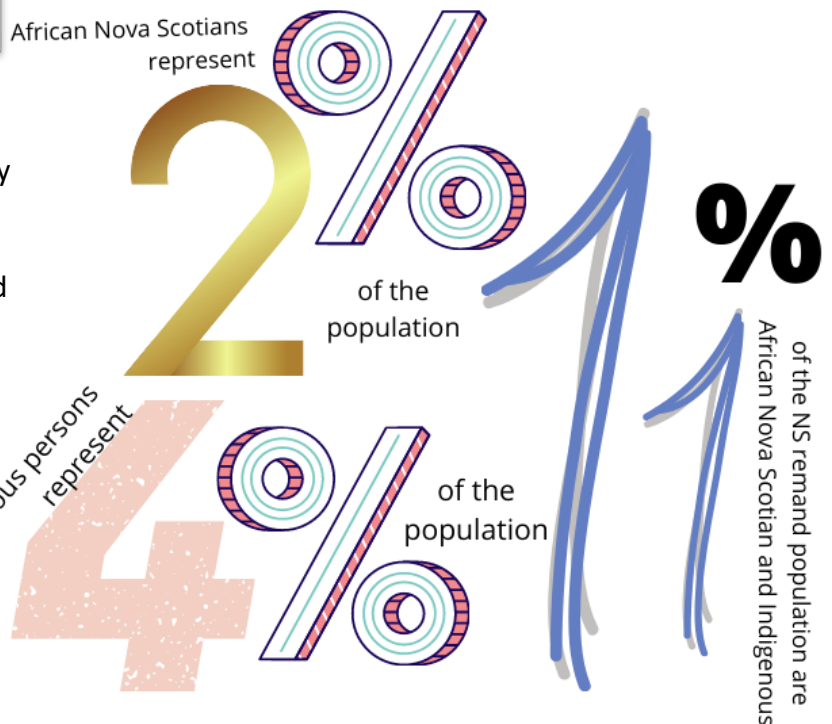


Bria Symonds, BA, BSW  
Cultural Path Coordinator

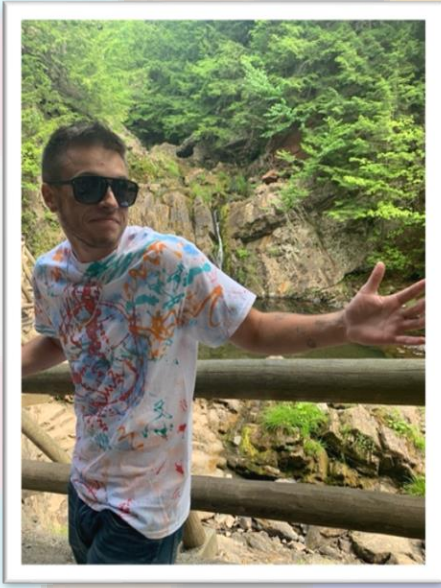


**There is an over-representation of African Nova Scotian and Indigenous people in the NS justice system, particularly for youths in custody. The Cultural Path program is dedicated to addressing this head on through advocacy, early intervention and prevention.**

Girls & Culture is a program partnership between the YMCA and Coverdale Courtwork Society and runs weekly at the John W. Lindsay YMCA. Girls ages 14 and up meet to develop leadership skills, gain new friendships, and discuss topics such as gender, culture, girlhood and healthy relationships.



## Coverdale Pride



In 2020, we celebrated our first community Pride festival with the support of **Halifax Pride**. Clients, staff, volunteers and community allies joined us for a week-long celebration of our 2SLGBTQIA+ community members.

We held critical discussions, hosted an online trivia, tie-dyed t-shirts, created a video outlining what Pride means to everyone (with special submissions from Senator Kim Pate and singer songwriter Melissa McCarthy) and finished off the week with a community BBQ at Victoria Park in Truro.

This is just the beginning of our commitment to the 2SLGBTQIA+ community who experience criminalization and imprisonment. We recognize the troubling injustices that are unique to this population and will continue work to address these issues and offer inclusive supports.



This year we conducted research on the experiences of 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals involved in the criminal justice system in Nova Scotia. Over 30 people participated and helped to shape our collective understanding of the issues that exist. A sense of disconnection from community was an overarching theme. We also heard about the violence and discrimination that 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals are faced with inside prisons, jails and within the court system.

*Thank you to the Community Foundation of Nova Scotia and Research Nova Scotia for funding this research and helping to inform and inspire change.*



## Thanks & Recognition



Thank you to the following funders who supported the mission of Coverdale in  
2020

The Affordable Housing Association of Nova Scotia  
Department of Justice Canada  
Department of Justice Nova Scotia  
Department of Community Services Nova Scotia  
Canadian Women's Foundation  
Research Nova Scotia  
Community Foundation of Nova Scotia  
The Law Foundation of Nova Scotia  
United Way of Halifax  
Halifax Youth Foundation  
United Church  
The Synod of the Atlantic Provinces  
Anglican Diocese of Nova Scotia and PEI  
St. David Presbyterian Church  
Sisters of Charity  
First Baptist Amherst  
Royal Bank of Canada  
Mental Health Foundation of Nova Scotia  
Nova Scotia Status of Women  
First Baptist Church of Halifax  
Halifax Pride  
Second Harvest

**Countless donors have contributed significantly to our mission, especially during this very challenging year. Thank you to the individuals, companies and businesses that gave to Coverdale so generously.**