

## ANN'S STORY

OCT 2021

*Thank you to Ann for sharing her story with us and for collaborating in the writing process.*

*Thank you to the staff of EFry for working with us to share Ann's story.*

### One person, one unit and one case plan at a time

Working in the homeless-serving sector is a challenging gig. Daily, workers bear witness to the barriers their clients face. Amidst the chaos of the frontlines, there are bright moments of hope that help to fuel the good work. They keep us going and lead us toward our goal of ending chronic homelessness in Saint John.



Image by Mike Capson

Since the pandemic arrived in New Brunswick in March 2020, a dedicated and tenacious group of housing and shelter providers and community agencies have gathered around a virtual Zoom table. Discussion focuses on an end to homelessness in Saint John, one person, one unit and one case plan at a time.

The conversations at the Homelessness Information Partnership Saint John's (HIPSJ) Case Conferencing table are difficult and focus on the daily struggles that our neighbours face as they navigate the increasingly treacherous housing market. Daunting stories of rapidly rising rents and the threat of spending another night on the streets are too frequent.

Despite the complex situations they face every day, those who work in the homeless serving sector continue to bring hope, compassion, and persistence to their work. Amidst the day-to-day and systemic challenges, there are stories of hope that, coupled with the shared aim to end homelessness in our community, helps to feed the momentum.

Here's Ann's story.

## ANN'S STORY

The Case Conferencing table came together as usual via Zoom for the typical Tuesday meeting. The team from the Elizabeth Fry Society (EFry) had submitted a name for discussion.

Ann (whose name is changed for confidentiality), is a Canadian citizen.



Ann's life changed when she was incarcerated for 13 years in a prison in the United States for a crime committed while protecting her children from physical harm. Friends and family support dropped away throughout her prison life. Fortunately, during her time incarcerated, Ann kept a close friend, Jennifer (whose name is changed for confidentiality), in Saint John with whom she shared regular correspondence.

When Ann completed her sentence in March 2021, Jennifer reached out to EFry NB to help Ann transition to New Brunswick. Amidst the pandemic, and in the custody of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), Ann was flown to Quebec to self-isolate in a hotel for two weeks without money, medical insurance, ID, or personal belongings.

In addition to those barriers, Ann was unilingual, unable to communicate in French. Elizabeth, EFry's Court Liaison Program Coordinator, who worked closely with Ann to navigate the various systems and challenges she faced, says, "I can't imagine how frightening that must have been to have felt so alone in a strange city."

## A HEART-WARMING TIME

The Red Cross helped Ann call EFryNB to let the team know where she was. Elizabeth assisted Ann in connecting with EFry Quebec, who responded immediately to provide a room in one of its residences. In the meantime, Elizabeth and EFryNB coordinated her travels plans to Saint John.

The team at EFry NB recalls the process:

*For us at EFryNB, it was a heart-warming time as many of our excellent Saint John community partners, through HIPSJ's Coordinated Access process, stepped forward unsolicited to provide essential costs for Ann to reach NB and settle.*

*EFryNB and EFry Quebec shared Ann's airfare to Moncton. HIPSJ paid for a designated taxi ride from Moncton to isolate in Saint John Hilton. Thanks to Elizabeth's advocacy, the Hilton waived hotel costs. Her damage deposit, first month's rent, and Saint John Energy deposit were all covered by HIPSJ. It truly takes a village.*



*Ann moved into EFryNB's My Place apartments, our supportive housing project. The EFry team helped Ann get her NB medical card and see a family doctor, which allowed her to renew her prescriptions. After getting a picture ID, she arranged Income Assistance and set up a bank account.*

*After helping Ann meet her immediate needs, EFryNB continued wrap-around services. Having been incarcerated since 2013, Ann needed some assistance to navigate the world in 2021. The team helped her learn how to use a cellphone and a computer. Moving forward, the team will help her cook, budget, and get to appointments. They will provide ongoing counselling, which will be available when needed. Once settled, we will help Ann find employment if wished.*

*Imagine a different scenario in which Ann would now be homeless in Montreal.*

## TOGETHER, WE CREATE SOLUTIONS THAT WOULD NOT BE POSSIBLE ALONE.



Through the By-Names List process, Ann was prioritized for housing at EFry NB's MyPlace housing program for women and gender-diverse individuals who come into contact with the criminal justice system.

Ann has settled into her apartment and is working on plans for her next chapter. The HIPSJ committee recently received a thank you letter from Ann. She writes:

*Dear HIPSJ,  
I have been much blessed by Elizabeth Fry and people like you who have shown me kindness and generosity since I came to*

*Saint John. Your assistance is so much appreciated.*

Ann's is just one story. Across the Province and the country, there are tables like the HIPSJ Case Conferencing table and agencies like EFry working to create a more just and equitable world for those experiencing homelessness. We open our case conferencing meetings with a guiding statement which includes the following words:

*We are here because we care about improving the lives of our most vulnerable community members. We believe everyone has a right to live in a safe, affordable home. Each of us*

*brings to this table a different set of experiences and opinions. Every voice is valued, and all perspectives are needed. Together, we create solutions that would not be possible alone.*

In the language of social work or social justice movements, we often describe the people we support as vulnerable. Ann's story demonstrates her equal participation in her self-advocacy and appreciation for her community. It's time we re-frame the problem of homelessness from the experience of those who are vulnerable to a situation wherein multiple barriers create inequitable access to housing and community support. Through our work as a community, together, working in a coordinated way, we continue to join equity-seeking individuals in their journey towards a free and just life - and in that way, we transform our world.

Let's keep going.

If you have questions about Saint John's By-Names List or homelessness resources, please email [BNLupdates@gmail.com](mailto:BNLupdates@gmail.com).