

## CONGREGATIONAL NEWS

# Why a Church?

By Aaron Crowe, Mizze Cote-Walker,  
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in Calgary, Alta.

One of the amazing blessings of the Spiritual-Relational Hub at Knox Presbyterian Church in Calgary, Alta., is the diversity of students that come to collaborate, learn, discover and be a part of creating a sense of belonging in community. This term, our three students from Bow Valley College who specialize in Addiction Studies with an Aboriginal Focus, were asked to share why they stepped into what some may not have seen as a normal practicum opportunity. (Students in 2021 have collaborated for 1,860 hours with Knox Spiritual Relational Hub.)

"When talking with the practicum placement instructor we were trying to figure out what I would be doing for practicum this fall. I was still living in Montreal the whole first year of school and didn't know all that much about Calgary other than what I had learned in school and seen when I visited. Once I finally moved to Calgary in May of 2021, I started working at an agency called Alpha House. They run a shelter, detox, housing and outreach program that promotes harm reduction in the city of Calgary. I have always been a huge supporter of harm reduction, so I was happy to have found myself there. Since I am already working in a high stress environment with folks that are struggling with addiction, I felt that working at Knox would be a great complement to my experiences in helping. I was raised going to an Anglican church in Montreal, but at twelve years old I decided that I was not a religious person, but I was told about how Knox Presbyterian is focused on community building, support and inclusiveness. These are all things that I am passionate about and firmly believe in. I may not be religious but, to me, there is no difference between doing practicum in a church, a rehabilitation centre, a homeless shelter or a prison. It's all about helping people in need regardless of race, religion, gender or any other defining factor. Knox made it abundantly clear that they also shared this same view. Not only did they share it but they were actively working in spreading a message of inclusiveness. I also found out that my instructor from the year prior, Ty Ragan, would be overseeing much of our practicum which

made me even more interested due to really enjoying the classes he taught. Hopefully with the community building and development skills I will learn at Knox coupled with my experience working with active addiction at Alpha House I will really be able to find the avenues that are right for me within the world of helping."

—Mark

"As a member of the Mi'kmaq people, I would like to thank the people of Knox Presbyterian Church for honouring me with the opportunity to build connections, share space and stories, and offer a chance to share my culture. As a child there was a time I was urged to hide my ancestry in fear that harm would come to me, and I would not have the same experiences as my peers. Through the ongoing work with Truth and Reconciliation I have embraced my heritage and feel pride in sharing it with all who wish to learn. Since the original stories heard from the Residential School survivors from 2008 to 2014 during the construction of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), we have seen Indigenous peoples speak up and seek the truth of what happened to their loved ones and find answers to why our Indigenous culture was stripped from us. Through this work Indigenous people have overcome many obstacles and barriers. Through the Indigenous way of life and the Medicine wheel we have begun the stages of healing. But with healing must come reconciliation and to achieve reconciliation we must come together as a community, as a country, and as people. I wish to thank Knox Presbyterian Church and its members for supporting me on the first annual National Day of Reconciliation, and holding space, heart, and memory for our ancestors who were not here to see this day in person, through our hearts they will be here in spirit.

"From the bottom of my heart, I thank you."

—Mizze

"I chose to do my practicum at Knox Presbyterian Church because I saw that it gave me the opportunity to apply what I learned in my classes to the real world setting by using methods of community building and outreach to foster an atmosphere for addiction prevention. It is proven that strong community support can provide mental health benefits to



A musical jam session run by students from Bow Valley College, majoring in Addiction Studies with an Aboriginal Focus, who chose to come to Knox Presbyterian Church in Calgary, Alta., for their practicum.

its members and even through this tough pandemic we are facing, Knox Presbyterian is adapting to keep connections as strong and inclusive as possible. I am an Indigenous student, representing the Piapot First Nations in Saskatchewan and am proud to be able to promote reconciliation and share my views regarding Indigenous affairs through my projects. Also being raised in a Christian household, I am comfortable in a church setting and was excited when I noticed all the ways in which Knox Presbyterian assists the community. From the community garden, little library and Good Food Box program to more further-reaching initiatives and programs that connect students with other agencies around the city. Seeing the emphasis that was placed on music at Knox Presbyterian was very pleasing as I have spent a good part of my life learning, playing and teaching music, and I look forward to integrating my talents into the work I do here. In the time I have been here I have already learned a lot and I can't wait to see what we can do for the community going forward into the term."

—Aaron

*Each student who has joined our community has served well, but more importantly, has been able to take the space opened to them to discern their next vocational steps.*



The Calgary Tower illuminated orange on September 30 for Orange Shirt Day.

