

## The Healing Power of Drumming

Sitting down with a drum can be a spiritual experience, says Darcy Turning Robe, who teaches the drumming circle every Tuesday as part of Closer to Home's Ee-Des-Spoom-Ooh-Soop program.

"The drum itself has its own spirit," he continues. "Every drum speaks to a person."

That was undoubtedly true for Asha\*, who first came to the program last fall.

"She could feel herself in the drum," says Marsha Hanson, Indigenous program facilitator and Elder of Pekewe House, Closer to Home's space for Indigenous programs and ceremonies. "She picked the same drum every week, because she told me the drum spoke to her."

As Asha continued drumming, Marsha says she started to notice a wall coming down.

"She came into the program very tight," she says. "She didn't trust anybody. But as she kept coming, we started to see a healing process happen. She was slowly coming to a place where she was starting to talk and let us in. She was drumming harder, she was singing louder, and she was engaging with other people. We started to see her smile. We started to see her laugh."

Marsha and Darcy smile as they remember the first time Asha came into the program without the ball cap that often kept her face hidden.

"I did not recognize her," says Darcy. "And we're talking about a lady that came here every Tuesday. She never missed a class. Even on one of the coldest days we had in the winter, she was here."

Before Christmas, Asha came to a drum-making event at Pekewe House. She brought a friend with her and made drums for herself, her kids and all her grandkids. "There was something I saw in her that day," recalls Marsha.



*Darcy plays during a drumming circle. Visit our website to watch the video.*

## The Gift of Quality Family Time

Riya\*, a single mom with two kids, lives in a Calgary Housing complex and is able to just cover her rent and basic needs with her income. Any expenses beyond this are a financial stretch for her. Her kids can only imagine the fun their friends have on family trips to the zoo and many others places.

Their first ever family visit to the zoo was made possible by a donation received from Closer to Home. "I cannot describe in words the quality time we had together," Riya says. "Thank you so much for giving us this moment. It will always be one of my special days."

Many kids in our communities are not able to access recreational or educational activities and instead engage in unproductive or inappropriate activities in their spare time, which hinders their physical and mental growth. Gifts of activity passes from donors like you give families quality time together and are important to promote their well-being.

You can give the gift of quality family time to families like Riya's.

### Donate passes to places like the:

- Glenbow Museum
- Telus Spark
- Calgary Zoo
- YMCA and City Pools

Contact us at (403) 543-0550, Ext. 250 or [jmelnychuk@closerhome.com](mailto:jmelnychuk@closerhome.com) for more information or to donate.

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"She still wouldn't let anybody take pictures of her, and she still didn't want to be out front where anybody knew who she was. But I saw that day that she was starting to release some of her pain."

"She started to share stories with me that she'd never shared before," Marsha smiles.

After the holidays, Asha came back and started participating in other programs, like the Indigenous healing program. And she continued coming every week to drumming.

Darcy, who is well-known in the Indigenous community as a Knowledge Keeper and often speaks to classrooms full of students through his partnership with the Calgary Board of Education, says that the way Closer to Home's programs are set up helps them feel more accessible.

"The way that we teach is more understandable in [Asha's] way," he says. "What we do here in the house is a more intimate type of feeling. We always lead with our heart. We're doing this for our people. We love our people."

Marsha adds that they try to never promise anything they can't deliver on. She remembers when Asha told her, "You followed through on what you said you were going to do. That's how I'm learning to trust."

"People are looking for a safe and trusting place to be," Marsha continues. "That's all we can do is be that – a safe place for them to heal."

Marsha and Darcy are blown away by the changes they've seen in Asha over the past six months. They've watched her grow from a shy, closed off individual to one who doesn't hesitate to wave hello when she sees them out in the community.

"Six months ago, she never would have done that," Darcy says. "She would have ducked and disappeared."

He shakes his head as he talks about her journey, clearly proud of the person she is becoming. "She's still going through changes and battles," he says, "but we're here to support her. And we know things are going to keep getting better for her as long as she keeps doing what she's doing. I have faith in what's she's doing."

Darcy looks down at his drum, acknowledging its healing power. The drum helps people get through trying times, he says, noting that he's seen it work its medicine with Asha. "It'll come alive when you need it."

Marsha, too, beams with pride when she talks about how far Asha has come. She's starting to give back and encouraging others to continue coming to the program, Marsha says. "She's saying to others: keep coming. This changes you. This helps you. These people care."

"She was someone I did not expect to see come back," Marsha says. "And now she's part of our family."

*\* Name changed to protect privacy*

## Top 3 Myths About Foster Care



### 1. I can't be a foster parent, because I don't have parenting experience.

**Truth:** No parenting experience is needed to become a foster parent. Many people with various backgrounds choose fostering. Although parenting experience is not necessary, you will need to meet certain criteria and participate in screening and assessment for licensing purposes. Additionally, CTH trains you in the Teaching-Family Model, which gives you hands on experience and understanding of parenting and helping children and youth achieve their full potential.

### 2. I would have to say yes to every child.

**Truth:** You will not be required to say 'yes' to every child. After you are licensed, you will have an opportunity to collect all of the information about each child before making a commitment. Your foster care team will assist by knowing your skill and comfort level, and will pre-screen all referrals to make the best possible matches for you and for the children requiring foster care.

### 3. I would become too attached and could never give a child back.

**Truth:** As a foster parent, you are expected to provide temporary care, safety and love for the child. Your foster child's parents/guardians are working hard to make better choices and improve their lives. When reunification is possible, you will feel sad to see the child go, but also so proud of the family for doing the hard work to bring their child home.

**Check our blog to read more.**

## Making Summer Camp Accessible for All Kids



When Lena\* and her family first came to Canada as refugees two years ago, they found it challenging to restart their lives. Mom and Dad both had strong educational backgrounds from their home country, but their degrees were not recognized in Canada.

Living on Vancouver Island, they also struggled to access supports for Lena, their youngest daughter, who has special needs. Lena is deaf and unable to speak, adding an extra layer of struggle when learning to communicate in a new country. The family would travel every week by ferry and bus to get to Vancouver for services to help her learn English sign language.

Mom and Dad's resolve never wavered, though. They made the decision to move to Calgary to be closer to much-needed services for their daughter. After searching for a job within the city to no avail, Dad found work in High River. He travels there every day, then comes back to Calgary to take night classes at Bow Valley College. Sometimes, he doesn't get home until 3:00 AM.

Minoush Rafie, program coordinator of Closer to Home's West Central Community Resource Centre, says she was struck by the family's positivity in such a challenging situation, and by Mom's determination to ensure that both her daughters had equal access to programs and opportunities.

Mom first registered her older daughter in Kids Konnect, our afterschool program for youth. Then she heard about Summer in the City, our free annual summer day camp. She loved the educational aspect of the program, and how it gave her daughter a chance to experience some of what Calgary has to offer – like trips to the Calgary Zoo and Telus Spark.

"I want both my daughters to make it to university," Minoush remembers Mom saying. She's hoping Mom will register both her daughters in summer camp this year. It may take some extra resources to ensure Lena's needs are taken care of, but Minoush too wants to make sure both girls have equal opportunities to learn and have fun.

"Her attitude blows me away," Minoush says. "Whatever we can do to help this family succeed, we will."

**You can help ensure children like Lena have the same access to opportunities as others. Donate via Shaw Birdies for Kids today and your gift will be matched up to 50%! Complete the form below or visit [clostertohome.com/birdies](https://clostertohome.com/birdies) to donate.**

\* Name changed to protect privacy

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*Please note: The Birdies for Kids program requires a minimum donation of \$10. Any donation over \$5,000 must be paid by cheque.*

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**Questions?** Contact us at (403) 543-0550 Ext. 250



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*Thank you to our donors and volunteers who supported Closer to Home in the last quarter (January 1, 2019 to March 31, 2019).*

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And many more donors who wish to remain anonymous.

## Join Our Team

### FOSTER PARENTS

These unique positions, which allow you to parent a child or children in your own home is for an individual or couple looking to have a positive and lasting impact on children and their families. The primary objective is to provide a caring family environment and specialized care for children who may otherwise be placed in more structured programs, while following all legislative and agency mandated policies and procedures involved in the care of foster children, and participating fully in the process of family reunification, if appropriate.

For detailed information or to check out more career and volunteer opportunities, please visit our website at [www.closertohome.com](http://www.closertohome.com).



*You Are Invited!*

## STAMPEDE STREET PARTY

BBQ-Music-Entertainment-And More

Thursday, July 4, 2019

11:30 am - 1:30 pm

3507 17 Ave SW

More details to come.

Stay tuned to [www.closertohome.com](http://www.closertohome.com).