

Breaking the Cycle: Building a Community of Support for Parents

When Cristina* had her first child, Colton, she was worried about how she would handle it. As a young, single mother with limited social supports in Calgary, she was determined to find a way to succeed.



Colton's father is not able to be in their lives, due to his own struggles with addiction.

"He wants to be there for his son, but he's just not in a condition to be around us right now," Cristina says. "So when I had Colton, I was open to learning about any resources that could help me out."

Cristina was referred to Closer to Home's Healthy Families home visitation program, a collaborative program that provides support to parents with newborns and young children who may be at-risk for a variety of reasons. In the program, Home Visitors work with parents like Cristina to enhance their parenting skills, improve their knowledge and understanding of child development, and promote health and positive family functioning while increasing connections with their community.

Nikki was the Home Visitor who worked closely with Cristina when she started in March of 2018. "She was experiencing post-partum depression, coupled with limited support in the city," Nikki says. "It was difficult for her to find her confidence as a first-time mother."

Nikki helped Cristina improve her knowledge of parenting and showed her what to look out for to ensure her son was hitting his developmental milestones.

"[Nikki] would give me positive feedback like, 'You're doing awesome!'" Cristina smiles. "It helped me feel like a good mom – like I really was doing everything right."

Today, Nikki talks about how proud she is of Cristina and the progress she's made.

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CLOSER TO HOME'S
ANNUAL REPORT TO THE
COMMUNITY EVENT

MARK YOUR CALENDARS
THURSDAY, OCTOBER 10, 2019

Doors Open and Silent Auction: 3:00 PM
Formal Program: 3:45 PM

Festival Hall, Inglewood 1215 10 Ave SE, Calgary

RSVP TO:
RECEPTION@CLOSTERTOHOME.COM
BY MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 30TH.
WE HOPE TO SEE YOU THERE!

"I've seen her confidence increase considerably over the past year or so. And now she's working on getting back in touch with her Indigenous culture and building her support network."

Nikki recently closed her file with Cristina and referred her to Dora, Closer to Home's In-Home Support Facilitator for Indigenous programs. Cristina regularly attends Closer to Home's drumming circles, and is excited to become more involved with her Cree heritage.

"One of my goals is to become more interactive with different cultural pieces like sweats, crafts and making skirts," Cristina says. "Growing up, I never felt comfortable as a Cree woman because I don't look Indigenous. I feel like I've been missing out for so long. But now I feel accepted, and it feels really good."

Dora says working with parents like Cristina is a rewarding job. Having grown up in foster care, she knows first-hand what so many of the parents in her programs are experiencing.

"For me, the key is to break the cycle," Dora says. "I know that it wasn't my mom's fault. She just didn't have the tools and support she needed. I want to be that support for parents who need it."

She continues, "Like Closer to Home, I believe the best place for kids to be is with their parents. So providing parents with the knowledge and skills they need – and especially the support they need – is critical."

Dora has been working with Cristina to help her find her cultural identity, from working with the Aboriginal Friendship Centre to help her get her status card, to ensuring she is connected to the Calgary Food Bank and other organizations so her basic needs are taken care of.

"[Cristina] is so open and accepting," Dora says. "Meeting her, hearing her story and watching her come this far... it's a good feeling. She's trying to be the person she knows she can be, and I'm so blessed to walk alongside her and support her in that."

Little Colton is now 18-months-old, and Cristina is continuing to work hard to be the best possible mom. She's still attending the drumming circles at Pekewe House often, and will be going through our Kiwehtata program again to learn more parenting skills and strategies specific to her culture.

"I'm just taking things one step at a time," Cristina says. "But I'm so grateful to have built these relationships with Nikki and now Dora. I feel supported and ready for whatever life brings me and my son next."

You can help parents like Cristina feel supported and knowledgeable to raise healthy, happy children. Flip to page 4 to complete the donation form, or visit closertohome.com/newsletter.

* Name changed to protect privacy

Parenting Tips



As adults, we should teach children to use basic skills such as how to follow instructions, accept feedback, raise concerns or disagree appropriately. By practicing these skills with your child regularly, they learn to listen more and argue less.

- 1** From an early age, teach your child what your expectations are when you ask them to do something. Have them practice looking at you, saying okay, completing the task and checking back with you, and then reward them with something that motivates them.
- 2** Be consistent! By having the same expectations for your child, you provide them with safety, security and predictability. When expectations change due to a child arguing, you are showing your child that outcomes can be changed by engaging in inappropriate behaviours and inadvertently teaching them to argue.
- 3** Provide your child with opportunities to practice using skills such as raising a concern or disagreeing appropriately. Teach them how to do what is asked, and equip them with the skills needed to make informed decisions, say no when necessary and question what is being asked of them when they do not understand.

Written by Bessie Dudu.

In Pictures: Recent Events and Activities



Thank You Aviva volunteers! Your hard work has improved the aesthetics of our Teaching Home and has also contributed to the increased sense of safety and security for the youth living there.



Volunteers help in many of our West Central Family Resource Centre's programs. We are thankful for their contributions!



These young kids with big hearts joined other participants to support and fundraise for Closer to Home as part of the Scotiabank Calgary Marathon. Thank you!



It was our pleasure to speak with all of you who visited our booth at Aboriginal Awareness Week Calgary's Family Day Festival on June 21st. We had the opportunity to hear directly from you and to share information about our programs and services for Indigenous families.



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And many more donors who wish to remain anonymous.

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Group Home Worker

Group Home Worker facilitates the success of children and youth by assisting with day to day activities and routines, implementing skill development strategies, managing crisis, assisting with school difficulties and providing relief coverage.

Awake Overnight Staff

The Awake Overnight Staff's primary responsibility is to provide awake and proactive overnight supervision in our programs for clientele ranging in age from 6 years to adult and to ensure the safety and security of all clients.

Food Bank Pick-Up Volunteer

The Food Bank Pick-Up Volunteer assists Closer to Home by picking up a variety of perishable and non-perishable food items from the Calgary Food Bank and bringing the donations to our West Central Family Resource Centre (the volunteer is responsible for loading and unloading the items into their vehicle).

*We are also looking for volunteers to help with our **Adopt-a-Family** initiative starting this fall.*

For detailed information or to check out more career and volunteer opportunities, please visit our website at www.closertohome.com.

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