INNER HOPE youth ministries

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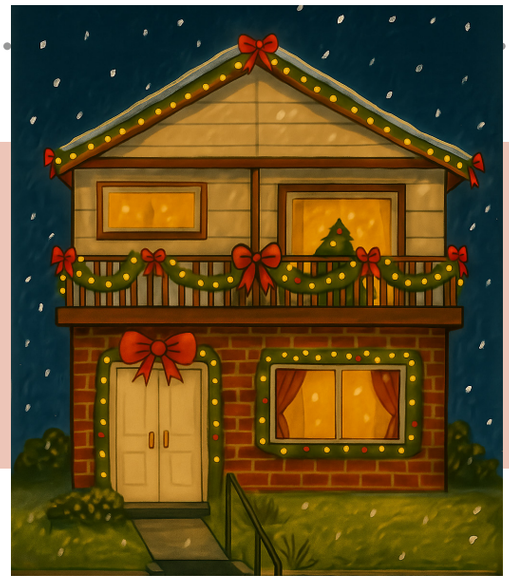
HOPE THROUGH RELATIONSHIPS

Winter 2025 Newsletter

A Season of Hope and Home

Jenny's Christmas Reflection



It's hard to believe that it has been eighteen and a half years since we launched Inner Hope Youth Ministries. I'll never forget that first day, loading our belongings into minivans and cars, and driving them from the small house my roommate Carla and I had rented to the big home on 29th Avenue. When I think back, an entire generation has nearly passed. It's incredible to look at the ways God has worked and moved, and the ways that love - consistent, steady, multiplying love - has shaped lives.

Many of you have been part of this journey for the whole eighteen and a half years. You've partnered with us, supported us, volunteered with us, served on the staff team, prayed with us, donated cookies or Christmas gifts, and walked alongside young people and families. I want you to know: your love and your support have had profound impact.

One of the clearest signs of that impact is this: today, we have three community members who once came through our doors as youth or young adults and who are now not only part of our staff team, but are truly leading our programs and supports for families and youth.

We have Mark Ang, who was only twenty years old on our launch day, helping us carry boxes as we moved in. Over the years he filled so many roles - summer intern, home support staff, youth coordinator—and today he serves as our Director of Programs, overseeing every one of our services with wisdom, humility, and strength.

We have Kayla Nelson, who I first knew as a child stopping by my house for a snack or a glass of water before Inner Hope existed. Her teen years were difficult, but she connected with Inner Hope in 2014 and received support and mentoring through her young adult years. Today she is thriving - married, a mother of three, and a vital part of our staff team supporting young adults. In a beautiful full-circle moment, she now hosts me and my teenager for dinner, giving me the kind of support I used to offer her when she walked through my door.

And then we have Richie, our Boundless Teen Mentoring Coordinator - the first person to grow up in one of our programs and come back to lead it. As a teenager, he had a mentor, attended Boundless workshops, and experienced firsthand the love and guidance offered here. Today, he is the coordinator of the entire program, pouring back into youth the same support that shaped him.

When I pause and reflect, it's truly mind-blowing to see how love multiplies. To witness these three shining their light in our community—leading, serving, and healing—is one of the greatest joys of Inner Hope's eighteen and a half years.

And to each of you who have journeyed with us, thank you, this is your legacy too.

Jenny Shantz
Executive Director

GIVING TUESDAY

DOUBLE YOUR GIFT

On Tuesday, Dec 2nd, generous donors will be matching gifts!

Give on Dec 2nd at INNERHOPE.CA/DOUBLE

Hayden's Story – A Light in The Darkness

Life has been challenging for a long time, and Inner Hope has been there for me in more ways than I can count. I moved to Vancouver when I was ten, so it's been twelve years of trying to figure things out without much family around. It was just me, my mom, and my brother. No extended family. No real community.

When I was about fourteen, my friends introduced me to Inner Hope. Walking into that house for the first time was something I'll never forget. My own home was always quiet, but Inner Hope was full of life. I heard laughter, voices, people moving around. It felt warm. It felt like love. It felt like a kind of community I had never experienced before. From that moment on, I knew this place was different.

Inner Hope became a place that supported me through everything: financial struggles, emotional challenges, mental health, all of it. I always knew that if I showed up at the door, I'd be welcomed, cared for, and supported—every single time.

Then, two years ago, I was in a serious car accident where we hit a deer. I was in the passenger seat, and I saw everything happen in slow motion. People talk about your life flashing before your eyes, and it's true - I saw every memory, every face, everything I've ever done. The deer came flying toward me, and in that moment, there was nothing I could do. I felt fear, but also this strange sense of acceptance.

Physically, I walked away almost untouched. But mentally, I didn't. The PTSD afterward was intense. I had been in accidents before, but nothing like this. For weeks, I kept seeing it replay in my mind. Getting into a car became terrifying. Every time I sat down in a passenger seat, I'd look to my left expecting something to come crashing toward me again.

And once again, Inner Hope was there. They listened to me when I needed it, helped me walk through the trauma, and supported me until the fear started to loosen its grip. They helped me find the courage to get back into a car, to breathe through the anxiety, and to feel safe again.

Inner Hope has truly been a light for me through loneliness, through trauma, through growing up without much of a community. I know I can come back anytime, and I'll be supported and loved just as much as I was the day I first walked in.

Drea's Story – Wrapped in Community

My name is Drea. I'm from the Anishinaabe, Heiltsuk, and Tsimshian Nations, and I grew up in Vancouver.

I go through phases of depression that can last anywhere from a week to months, where it's hard to get out of bed or find the will to do anything. A couple of months ago, I fell into one of those phases again, and my mentor from Inner Hope kept reaching out—checking in, inviting me to hang out, asking how I was doing. That really helped pull me out of that dark place a lot faster. When I'm on my own, it usually takes much longer, but having someone consistently show up for me really mattered.

What stands out is how cared for and loved I felt. My mentor's support was gentle, steady, and without judgment. Just knowing I had someone to turn to made things feel lighter, and it's comforting to have someone who truly sees you, especially when you're struggling.

Inner Hope has always been that kind of community. I've known many of them since I was a kid. My auntie was part of the Inner Hope community, which is how I first learned about it. Over the years I've met many others who have been supported and encouraged here. There's a real sense of belonging that's hard to find elsewhere.

When I think about life before Inner Hope, or what it might've been like without them, it scares me a little. Even with their support, I still struggled with drinking for a while, but with their help, that's gone down a lot. Without Inner Hope, I think I could have gone down a really bad road—drinking more, experimenting with drugs, maybe getting caught up in things that would've been hard to come back from.

Inner Hope has kept me grounded and safe. I'm really grateful for the support, the community, and the people who never make me feel judged. I honestly don't know where I'd be without them today.

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