



A Journey of Healing and Education

Central Urban Métis Federation Inc., Infinity House – Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

Susanⁱ didn't know what to wear. She didn't know what to make for supper. She had no one to look after her three kids. She was late for her appointment and had no way to get there.

She was in a crisis. And so were the staff of the Central Urban Métis Federation Inc. (CUMFI) in Saskatoon when she called at the last minute asking for help.

"She was always in 'crisis mode,'" says Trinia La Rose, Manager of CUMFI's 15-unit apartment complex called Infinity House. "She would debate everything with herself right up to the last moment. Her reasoning was that she didn't know what to do and didn't know if she should ask for help."

Low self-esteem and a need for approval can come to dominate the lives of people who have been abused. This was the case for Susan.

She and her three children, ages 5, 6 and 9, were fleeing an abusive relationship from another province. The abuse had left Susan with very low self-esteem and she was unable to make even the smallest decision without someone's approval.

"At Infinity House, although we identify barriers, we focus on the individual's strengths that will get them around those barriers," says Trinia. "This mother's strength, even through her hardest times was that she is a survivor."

And now, because of that strength and some help from Infinity House, she is on a journey of healing and education.

A few years ago, CUMFI received over \$660,000 from the Urban Aboriginal component of the federal government's National Homelessness Initiative. With some key

partners, such as the Clarence Campeau Development Fund, they used the money to buy and renovate a 15-unit apartment complex. The complex became Infinity House, a supportive housing facility for Aboriginal single mothers and their children.

CUMFI also provides educational programs, economic development, recreational initiatives and other activities to assist Métis people in Saskatoon to become more independent. People like Susan.

She now lives at Infinity House and is participating in many referred programs. While attending these programs she has taken the initiative to enroll in other programs she thought would be helpful. She's taking courses dealing with domestic abuse as well as an upgrading and job readiness course. She's involved in sharing circles and Aboriginal ceremonies.

She walks her children to school and daycare every day. She has even enrolled them in pow-wow dancing and other youth programs.

"When she attends her case plan meetings with her intervention worker at Infinity House, she tells of what she did that week and how things are going, rather than asking what she should do that day," says Trinia. "Her willingness to face things head on and not stress over little things has minimized the intervention needed."

Susan has always been a survivor. But now she has something more. Now she has the strength to take control of her life and make positive decisions for herself and her children without seeking permission. She is learning, growing and becoming more independent every day.

She is no longer in crisis.

ⁱ Name of client changed to protect privacy.