



BREAKING CYCLES OF DEFEAT SINCE 2007



A MINISTRY MOMENT

ARTICLES

Ministry Moment
Page 1

Leanna's Story
Page 2

Hope Lives Banquet
Page 3

What's New
Page 4

Most of this week’s Life-skill blocks were filled with a class called “Discovering Destiny”.

In this class, our participants are given some tools to help them process what God’s purpose is for them. Then they have some time to reflect, process and respond to the question, “If you were free to pursue your destiny, what would your life look like?” Then they share their destiny in front of the class and some staff.

Remember these are people who have given up on themselves, and to a large extent, have had family, friends, and community give up on them, too. So, for them to come to the place of saying, “I have a purpose”, “I have a destiny”, and then describe what that could look like is an amazing transformation. Or, they may say something like “I can make a positive difference by _____”. Hearing the passion be rebirthed in their story is amazing.

I wish you could have been here and heard them share their journeys. The stories that came out began with the hurt, brokenness and pain reflected in experiences of abuse, rape, gun violence, being trafficked, stabbings, suicide, abuse through foster care, abandonment, losing children to the system, homelessness, addiction and much more. To hear the pain, and then hear the response that comes from the healing is so impacting. We heard hope as they described their next steps. We heard them share things like;

- I want to go back to school and become a nurse.
- I’m going to get my children back and give them the life that I was deprived of.
- I care deeply for people and can see myself helping with palliative care.
- I want to be a listening ear to those experiencing homelessness and helplessness.
- I want to go back to school and become an addiction counsellor.
- I want to work at Rising Above.
- I’m going to be an advocate for those caught in human trafficking.
- I want to have a hobby farm.
- I will go back to being an equipment operator so I can help others in my free time.

And the stories of hope and purpose go on and on. Hearing their renewed passion for life and the discovery of destiny is not only enlightening for them but inspirational for others.

Rising Above is a place where these types of transformations happen. We thank God for bringing hope and healing to people trapped in cycles of defeat.

We are grateful for your support that keeps the doors open and allows this ministry to continue.



Mel Siggelkow and Rick Zimmerman receive awards for their outstanding work in the community!

Mel Siggelkow

Leanna's Story



"I HAD A VISION I WAS IN A CAGE. THE CHAINS THAT BOUND ME WERE SO TIGHT THAT THEY WERE EMBEDDED INTO MY SKIN."

I once had a vision. The vision was powerful and reflected the state of my heart. I was in a dark cage. The chains around my wrists were embedded into my skin like they were part of me. I felt trapped and hopeless - like I was left to die alone in the dark.

Before coming to Rising Above I was drowning in alcoholism. I was depressed, and self-harming behaviors were a normal thing for me which eventually led to multiple suicide attempts. I have lost so many people to suicide and overdose. Peerless Trout is a nation that is struggling with meth, alcohol, and suicide. I lost my cousin to suicide and multiple other community members are gone because of this. My sister died of a prescription medication overdose and I lost my uncle to alcoholism.

Cumulative grief: Cumulative grief is what happens when you do not have time to process one loss before incurring another. The losses come in too rapid a succession for you, the bereaved, to heal from the initial loss. The difficult emotions which come from the initial loss bleed into the experience of the second loss.

I didn't realize I needed help until my kokum said so. It shook me hard and made me angry. I took off and continued to drink. I ended up in the hospital twice and I'd wake up with fresh cuts on my arms with the inability to remember what happened.

One day, my kokum had an application to Rising Above and I was looking over it. I only filled out half of it and then I was gone for a week. I came back and realized I was slowly burning the bridge with my kokum, and I didn't like it. So, I completed the application and visited the Healing Centre's Director, Helen Starr, and she got me on my way. A few days later I got a call from Kimberly Cairns, the Rising Above Intake Manager, and she asked me to stay sober for 7 days as this is a requirement to enter the program. I thought it was going to be easy to remain sober for 7 days. It wasn't.

On the 6th day, I called Rising Above and asked Kimberly Cairns, the Intake Manager, when my bed date was. She said she'd call me as soon as one was available. I thought I had more time, but Kimberly called the next day and told me they had a bed waiting for me. I wasn't mentally prepared, but I grabbed my belongings and made the long trip to Grande Prairie. I was so scared and I didn't know what to expect. February 13th was my first day at Rising Above. When I first got here, everyone was smiling. It made me uneasy. I felt so depressed and sad that I felt like I didn't belong. I wasn't smiling, and I didn't want to. I felt so ugly inside. But then throughout the following weeks, something inside of me began to change. I was brought back to the vision of the cage. Beams of light now graced the dark space where I was trapped. I felt a sense of hope.

The biggest take away from the program so far is learning to love myself again and learning about myself. It feels like God put me here for a reason. The hope I have for the future is to take my learnings and experiences to help others within my community. I was 3 semesters into an addiction course but dropped out due to addiction. I want to complete the course and put it toward helping others. I took aboriginal studies as well and learned about residential schools and the affects colonialism has had on my culture. I understand and see the traumas faced by my people and the sad reality that we are losing an entire generation of people to hard drugs, alcohol, and suicide.

I attribute my recovery success to the person who never gave up on me - my kokum. My kokum said to me "Jesus fell down on the way to the cross, but he kept getting up so he could finish what he started." That encouraged me to get up and keep going.

My story doesn't end here.

Isaiab 43:2 NLT

When you go through deep waters, I will be with you. When you go through rivers of difficulty, you will not drown. When you walk through the fire of oppression, you will not be burned up; the flames will not consume you.



Hope Lives 2023

15 years ago, Rising Above held its first small banquet to raise funds for the ministry. Those who were on staff at the time chuckle as they remember the lengths they went to to get people in those seats. "Rise a what?" In those days, people were not sure what Rising Above was.

Mid-February 2023, we faced a different problem. We were completely sold out at 592 tickets a month and a half before the banquet. With a growing waitlist, we decided to increase capacity to 752 tickets, marking the highest-attended banquet in Rising Above history. This year has been one of increase - increased tickets, double the sponsors, and increased donations. At 11:30pm on the night of the banquet with just the staff left in the hall, it was announced that nearly \$300,000.00 was raised to help people break cycles of defeat. We were awestruck and completely overwhelmed by the generosity of our supporters.

After our provincial funding of \$600,000.00 was cut in 2012, 40 people gathered in the small Rising Above classroom and asked God if we should continue with this ministry. Now 11 years later, we continue to gather. But now we confidently ask - "God, where to next?"

Rising Above is God's ministry, and we are his laborers. Thank you for supporting God's work through your kind words, donations, prayers, and volunteer efforts. God uses people like you to help others in need - and we see the fruit his laborers produce every time someone walks through the doors, takes a one-month sobriety chip, secures employment, makes amends with loved ones, and says yes to Christ's great adventure. This place is bursting with miracles every day, and we honestly couldn't do what we do without you.

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Peerless Trout First Nation Update



Rising Above's Communications and Development Manager, Stephanie Hudson, had a short conversation with the Director of the Healing Centre, Helen Starr, in Peerless Trout First Nation. Stephanie asked Helen how the relationship between PTFN and Rising Above is impacting their community, and this was Helen's response:

"The impact of Rising Above on the community has been tremendous. Members of the community are asking for Rising Above and most people that come to the Healing Center at PTFN want what Rising Above has to offer. Mel Siggelkow makes the 5-hour drive to PTFN x4 times a year to do presentations for the community as well as provide Inner Healing. The thing about Mel is he doesn't leave behind previous people he has encountered. He remembers them and gets them the support they need. People feel seen, heard, and valued and they look forward to seeing him. We are always receiving calls from people who want to know when he's coming back. The biggest impact of Inner Healing and community presentations is how much God is involved in the process. They don't just claim to be a Christian organization, they truly are! God knew what our nation needed, and we are finding it with the help of Rising Above.

To those who donate to Rising Above, I want to say thank you. Without your support, there would have been no way that this partnership could have been possible. I don't think you realize how much your support is impacting lives in our small Northern reserves. Thank you so much! We need to have these programs in place in these communities. It's changing lives."

Rising Above FSJ Update

Our friends in the Northwest Peace are gearing up to open in the coming months. A facility is already in place and they have the beginnings of a strong Board of Directors. Due to the wildfires around Fort St. John, the event that was supposed to take place on May 26th was postponed to Saturday, September 16th at Charlie Lake Hall in Charlie Lake, BC. The committee felt this was a wise decision as most people were distracted with growing concerns about nearby fires - understandably so.

If you're reading this, please keep our FSJ division in your prayers as they move toward opening. Below are some prayer requests you can keep in mind for Rising Above FSJ:

- Executive Director
- Financial support
- Building logistics
- Community support

