

WELCOME INN

## MEDIA RELEASE

December 10, 2019

### Local Group to “Welcome Inn” People Experiencing Homelessness

Kelowna has a significant shortage of shelter beds this winter season, leaving an estimated 80+ citizens sleeping outdoors. As announced last week, BC Housing has partnered with The John Howard Society to open new bridge to housing beds on Fuller Ave which will provide an opportunity for people to leave the shelter system, freeing up much needed spaces in local shelters. Even with this facility, approximately 40 more people will still be sleeping outside and local service providers in Kelowna have indicated they do not have the capacity to manage another shelter. This has left a significant gap in the community to address an urgent need.

Deeply troubled by the fact that people are sleeping outside in subzero temperatures, two local residents, Tara Tschritter (businesswoman, previously managed Inn from the Cold) and Jason Siebenga (businessman, Chairman of Metro Community Church) have stepped forward and offered to open and operate a shelter they are calling “Welcome Inn” to meet the urgent need of fellow community members. “Journey Home identified a location, BC Housing agreed to fund it, The Gospel Mission is providing meals, the City has facilitated connections and Turning Points is providing training and operational support. What has emerged is a beautiful example of what happens when the community comes together to create a solution – the Journey Home Strategy at work!!” says Siebenga.

“Like many of you, I have watched this crisis unfold from the warmth and comfort of my home over the past few months” says Tara Tschritter. Tschritter says she was happy to agree to co-manage the site when the opportunity presented. “With funding and a great location we are confident that volunteers and shelter staff will emerge from our compassionate community!”

The only thing that stands in the way of Welcome Inn opening its doors is staff and volunteers! Tschritter and Siebenga ask: “even if you have not considered it before, please consider it now. People in our community need you – serve along side fellow community members and help us create a space for people to find community, safety, dignity, healing and respect.”

Targeted opening late December / early January. Those who are interested in helping out can visit [www.welcomeinn.org](http://www.welcomeinn.org) to find out more.

For more information:

Jason Siebenga  
Site Coordinator  
Welcome Inn  
(250) 212-8000  
Info@welcomeinn.org

Tara Tschritter  
Site Coordinator  
Welcome Inn  
(250) 575 – 9331  
Info@welcomeinn.org