

*Ingrid Dykstra, Executive Director – North District*

“There is no house  
like the house of belonging.”

*David Whyte, The House of Belonging*

I want to share a story about two men who face incredible challenges. Dave and Keith (not their real names) grew up with instability. In their early years, along with navigating developmental disabilities, they frequently moved from one care home to another. Their parents were overwhelmed, and they lacked natural supports.

When Dave and Keith became adults, they needed to find their own home. Housing was either too expensive, in unsafe parts of town, or not accessible to them at all. Many landlords avoid tenants who, like Dave and Keith, rely on disability support payments. In the absence of safe homes and positive communities, Dave and Keith were drawn into groups that encouraged “high risk behavior.”

Though still seeking an affordable home environment where they experience belonging, Dave and Keith know what it looks like. Asked about what makes a house a home, Dave would say, “where I can put down roots” or “where people have my back.”

**What I hope to communicate is how important it is to *live in a community—to live where people care about you, and you care about people. To live in a home where you belong.***

For many decades now, Christian Horizons has nurtured community with people like Dave and Keith. It all started in 1965 when our founders, Jim and Adrienne Reese, invited a community of belonging to surround them and their son, Steven. Jim and Adrienne’s vision was always to invite others in. To be community together, and to extend that community to others.

Today we continue this work by thinking beyond group homes. We are exploring new opportunities to further a sense of community in and around someone’s house or apartment, rather than grouping people in a home in a community.

In North Bay, we plan to transform a twelve-bedroom group living home into four two-bedroom units that will share the outdoor space, laundry, and parking facilities. Dave and Keith will be supported in one unit of the home, leaving three apartments to welcome

others who want to be a part of intentional community or need the affordability and support it offers.

Without stability in a person's home, it's challenging to find the energy, courage, and focus required to address any other aspects of life. In 2017, the chief medical officer of health in Ontario emphasized that "when people have more control over their housing, this can have a positive impact on one's health, mental state, safety, education and income." And if you can find a home where the people who live with you or beside you *care about you*, then the sky's the limit on what is possible!

### Making the Connection

- Take a moment to think about what it feels like to *belong* to a community, not just live in a community. Perhaps you live in a neighbourhood where people cut each other's lawn to help out? Or shovel each other's driveways? Can you describe a time where you lived in a community where you truly felt that people cared about you and that you cared about the people around you?
- Share your ideas on how to be creative with enhancing a sense of belonging either within the home or within the neighbourhood for people you support.

### Additional Resources

1. Learn more about Christian Horizons' origins at [christianhorizons.org/mission-history/](https://christianhorizons.org/mission-history/)
2. David Petkau recently shared about Christian Horizons' exciting new projects in affordable housing on the podcast "Cribwolf Talks." You can listen here: <https://www.iheart.com/podcast/269-cribwolf-talks-82391323/>