

Sandra's* story

This city is all that I know. I was born and raised here. I went to school here until Grade Ten. That's when I stopped school. I got married instead. That's just what I did. Soon after, I had my two boys, and I raised my family.

I was with the same man for thirty-seven years, until he wanted somebody else — somebody new.

One day, he called the police and had me put in the hospital. First, I was cuffed by the police and then taken to a police station.

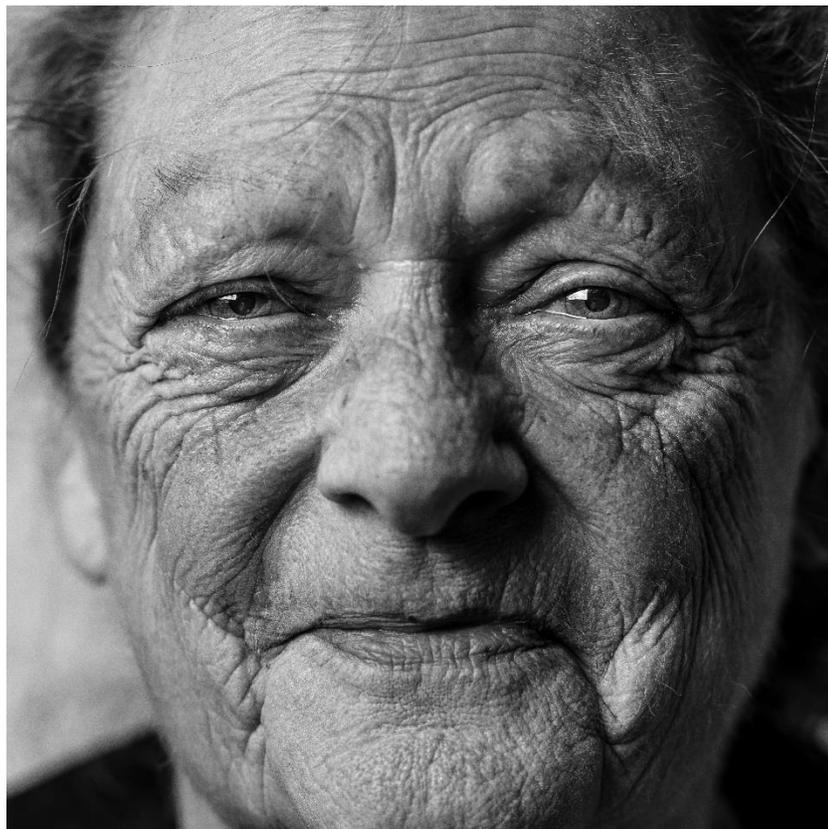


Photo by Glen Hodson on Unsplash. * Likeness and name changed to respect privacy.

They were waiting for a hospital bed for me. I felt so helpless. I waited for hours. I gave them numbers of family members to call, but they were not able to reach anyone. This crisis happened in the late 1990s. I ended up going into a psychiatric hospital later that day. Shortly after I was released and needed to find short term housing through the YMCA.

A few months later, I ended up taking my husband to court and won a small settlement, and tried to restart my life. However, I felt broken from everything that had happened. I had become truly mentally and physically unwell. If I was not sick before that day in the police station, I certainly was now. I needed help. I found myself at Cornerstone's downtown Women's Emergency Shelter. I felt safe there for the first time in as long as I could remember. That was around 1999. **Cornerstone saved my life. Literally.**

I moved from the Emergency Shelter into the MacLaren location in Centretown, and then to Booth Street when it opened in 2011.

If it were not for all of the support that I received, I would not have survived. I have had over 14 operations, as my health was not good. Cataracts, colostomy, heart – there was a lot that I was going through. The staff were always there for me, plus the onsite nursing and licensed kitchen made a huge difference in how fast it took for me to recover.

If it were not for all of the support that I received, I would not have survived. I have had over 14 operations, as my health was not good. Cataracts, colostomy, heart – there was a lot that I was going through. The staff were always there for me, plus the onsite nursing and licensed kitchen made a huge difference in how fast it took for me to recover.

Booth Street, where I live, has forty-two women who live here like any other tenants. They pay rent-g geared-to-income. Many women are like me, seniors that have chronic health issues. I would not have survived elsewhere.

Being a senior woman is hard enough without worrying about a safe home.

Today, I am sixty-seven years old. I am in better health now, but still need help with my medications. I am sad to say I don't have much contact with my family. Most of my relations are no longer living. Cornerstone has been my family for almost twenty-one years. I belong here.

I love my apartment too. I have hosted politicians and other guests in my place. Whenever someone wants to understand better what's it's like to live here; I open up my space so they can see. People have told me my place is quite nice. I have an eye for detail. I think I have shown at least fifty people in my apartment. I am proud of it.

If I can say anything else to you, it's this. **Invest in Cornerstone.** We are always full, well run, and it's a worthy place.

My favourite time of year is the holidays, but I like Bingo Bonanza, too! Chef Greg put on a BBQ just for the fun of it the other day. We recently had a lovely Thanksgiving. I know that I can spend the rest of my life here and be okay. In the winter of my life, I have my spiritual and physical needs met.

There is love here.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "sandra". The letters are cursive and lowercase.

Sandra, Resident