

New Horizons Update: Reopening with a Café!

Welcome Inn is looking forward to the **grand reopening of our social enterprise!**

New Horizons Thrift Store is currently closed due to COVID-19, but we're excited to reopen in the coming year. We're taking this pause as an opportunity to build on the **success of New Horizons**—we'll be expanding the thrift store with a café and community space, which we're calling a **Community Outreach Café**. Our goal is to open the expanded store in a new location by the end of the year.

This project was supported by the Investment Readiness Program with funds from the Government of Canada's Social Finance Fund. Through this support, Welcome Inn engaged in a six-month project to expand our social enterprise programming. The funding allowed us to conduct community-based research and develop the new business plan for the expansion, grounded in our vision, values, and dimensions of wellness.

The Wellness Areas

For us, it's not about creating another program; it's about empowering members of the community so that **ALL** might be **well**.
Welcome Inn promotes wellness in eight key areas >>>>

	Social: Supported, connected, engaged		Intellectual: Creative, articulate, skilled
	Physical: Healthy, safe, well-fed		Emotional: Self-aware, reflective, grounded
	Occupational: Purpose-driven, fulfilled, self-directed		Environmental: Attentive, active, safe
	Financial: Stable, interdependent, housed		Spiritual: Peaceful, mindful, compassionate

The project was completed in two phases. First, we conducted a community-based research process from September to December 2020, which drew on perspectives of community members, volunteers, staff, and placement partners to provide an understanding of the community's strengths and challenges and generate ideas for a social enterprise expansion. Second, after additional community consultation and a strategic planning session, we developed a business plan for the selected idea, a community outreach café connected to the thrift store.

The project as a whole has enabled Welcome Inn to prepare for a re-opening of our expanded social enterprise by the end of 2021. The expansion will strengthen the vibrant North End community in several ways, offering capacity-building opportunities, social support, and connection to resources.

Quotations from research participants, showing the value of each aspect of the expansion:

Community

“It’s a meeting place... You have a lot of people that come back all the time. They come in and they recognize the people that are in the shop, and it has a big role to play to support the area. I couldn’t think of it not being there.”

“New Horizons is a real community, supports a lot of people.”

“A space... right close to the store. That’s our place. Some place they could sit for a short period of time and chat.”

“An actual sort of gathering space. There’s times when I look around the store and half the people are shopping and half the people are gabbing.”

“The social aspect is profoundly important.”

Outreach

“What do we have that the other thrift shops don’t have? My conclusion was we have the resources of the Welcome Inn. This is the only thrift shop I have ever seen with signs in Arabic.”

“We need... resources that people can’t find, like a little stand with cards and stuff. That would be amazing because so many people come in and out of there. If we had numbers, or they need help from CAS, women’s shelters... if that information was available because we have so much need in the community.”

“Access to resources ... economic status, access to food stores, and that sort of thing, I think is more challenging in the North End.”

Café

“A more informal space that might attract people, if at all possible with a coffee.”

“It would be nice to have like a coffee pot on all day long. I don’t know how expensive that is but just to have a coffee pot and some cheap cream and sugar.”

“A small community cafe type thing. Especially a place we could put our extra books because we get so many books. If we had a small cafe with seating where people could sit and talk to each other. Take books off of the shelf...”

“Maybe there’s space for a café space that could actually be part of a gathering space.”

Building upon the success of New Horizons Thrift Store, the café will have a small, affordable menu, focusing on good-quality coffee and local baked goods. Community outreach will be prioritized, with a designated space for peer leaders and staff to connect with community members. Volunteers and placement participants will engage in day-to-day food service and community outreach tasks, allowing for skill-building and employment experience.

Thanks to everyone who participated in the community-based research process that determined how we plan to expand New Horizons. Whether you participated in an interview, a survey, or just a casual conversation, Welcome Inn is deeply grateful for your insightful and valuable knowledge. Our Community Outreach Café will build on the strengths of the thrift store and the neighbourhood, while also adding a little something new that everyone can enjoy—all based on your feedback. We’ll be looking for café volunteers when we reopen, so **keep an eye out for future opportunities to be a part of this exciting new project!**