



IMPACT REPORT 2020

SAFETY NET



ZEROCEILING

Our Vision

To end youth homelessness.

Our Mission

To provide young people experiencing homelessness with supportive housing, employment, support, life skills, and outdoor adventure that empowers them to live healthy and independent lives.



Our Staff

Co-Executive Directors

Sean Easton

Chris Wrightson

Development Team

Lizi McLoughlin

Michelle Neveklovska

Jill Patrick

Programming Team

Mikey Barton

Paul Baxter

Kelsey Blair-Rose

Tom Graham

Cedric Nkunuzwami

Laura Rudderforth

Rhianna Russell

Dakota Williams

Our Board of Directors

Jill Johnston, Chair

Mathieu Bouchard, Treasurer

Nikki Best, Secretary

Nicola Bentley

Nicole Chetwynd

Kristi Collins

Jon Dietrich

Joey Houssian

Catherine Power-Chartrand

Russ Wood

Letter from our leaders

SAFETY NET

Dear Friends,

We are grateful to be able to operate on the shared, unceded territory belonging to the Skwxwú7mesh and Lílwat Nations. We look forward to creating meaningful connections to the rightful stewards of this beautiful land in the years ahead.

When we wrote this letter a year ago, we were at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. At that time, we were experiencing the first of early restrictions, closures, and life adjustments. We really had no idea what was to come, or just how tough it would be on the youth in our programs or our staff team.

It did not take long to understand that, although we were all affected, it is the most vulnerable in our society who are the most gravely impacted. We saw this firsthand in our participants. Young people with so much resilience were no longer able to cope. Crisis events that were once few and far between became our new norm. Demand on our staff and organization as a whole escalated as the pandemic endured. But the clarity we have around our purpose enabled the team to adjust our services to meet the new and increasing needs of the youth in our programs.

Over this past year, we have accomplished more than we thought possible. We secured our own (independent) supportive housing, expanded our supportive employer relationships, increased our life skills and support programs, met elevated mental

health needs, grew our staff team, and hosted more youth in our Work 2 Live program than ever before.

To describe the Zero Ceiling support system as a safety net seems apt. At the very inception of our program, the question of "what do youth need to develop into happy, healthy adults?" drove everything we did. We considered how a family supports their child: kids need so much more than to have their basic needs met. They need a sense of belonging and a safe refuge from which they can take chances and make mistakes. There is no better way to learn than to experiment, reflect, and try again. This is only possible with a safety net. Without one, people face consequences disproportionate to the mistakes they make.

A safety net is knowing that you have people behind you no matter what. This is what we strive for at Zero Ceiling: to provide relationships that demonstrate acceptance and love, that empower those we work with to find their true selves.

With 2020 behind us and another uncertain year ahead, we take solace in knowing our work is important and we have the support of our community behind us. We thank you for your continued support.

Sincerely,

Jill Johnston, Sean Easton, and Chris Wrightson
Zero Ceiling Leadership



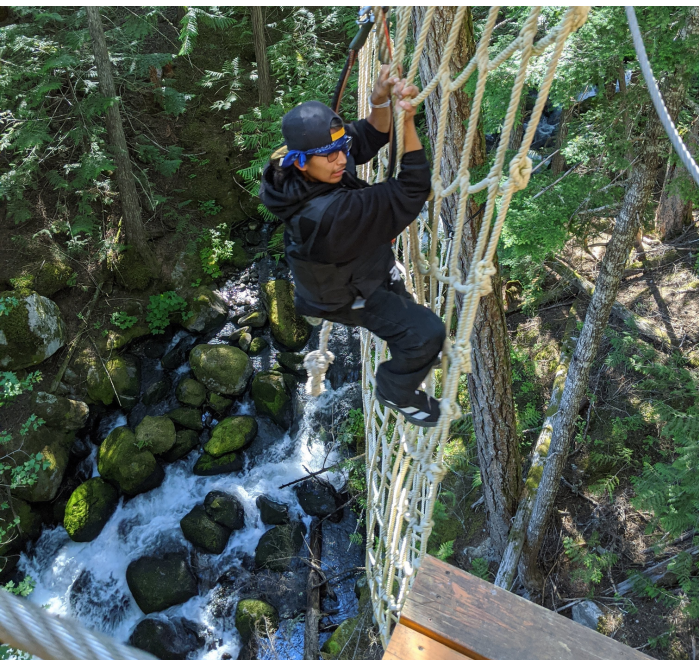
Adventure Sessions

Through the Adventure sessions, we host small groups of youth aged 16-24 in Whistler, BC, for a day of mountain excursions. We are proud to provide our partner youth agencies from across southwestern BC with free activities, kindly provided as in-kind contributions by community partners Whistler Blackcomb and The Adventure Group. Many young people who join our Work 2 Live program get their first taste of the mountains through the Adventure Sessions program.

In 2020, we offered skiing and snowboarding in winter, and ziplining, treetops rope course, mountain biking, and hiking in the summer. Though we had to accommodate the new realities of

operating a COVID-safe program, we were still able to run 18 sessions and provide young people in our region with the opportunity to experience land-based activities, to help improve individual participant's physical, mental, emotional, and relational wellbeing.

We hired Work 2 Live graduate and now Overnight Support Worker, Dakota Williams, as our first Adventure Sessions Summer Host to accompany each group. We plan to continue working with more graduates in the future! They will engage with youth, encourage fun and healthy interactions with one another and with nature, and support our partners in creating a safe experience for all.



149 Adventurers
12 Youth Organizations
47 Indigenous Participants
4 2020 Adventure Sessions
Participants joined Work 2 Live

Work 2 Live

Work 2 Live is our 12-month program that gives comprehensive individual support to youth (aged 19-24) experiencing homelessness or unstable housing. Our goal for this program is to end youth homelessness by supporting participants to overcome and dismantle the barriers — both individual and systemic — that stand between them and healthy adulthood.

To do that, we provide what we call our Pillars of Support: supportive housing, supportive employment, mental health support, food security, land-based programming, and life skills education.

When we talk about how Work 2 Live has changed in the last year, we use

words like "strengthen" or "expand". By nearly every measure and in every direction, Work 2 Live grew larger and better capable of supporting youth through one of the most unstable periods in modern memory.

Some of 2020's highlights include:

- Changing our housing model
- Increasing mental health support
- Adding two permanent & three casual overnight staff
- Working with more supportive employers
- Adding in-house counselling for participants and graduates through our partners at Dan's Legacy
- Joining the BC Coalition to End Youth Homelessness

Youth served 16

New graduates in 2020 7

Employer partnerships 3

Applicants to Work 2 Live 20



Supportive Housing

Our biggest priority in 2020 was keeping all of our Work 2 Live (W2L) participants housed. The pandemic made it clear that our supportive housing model would have to adapt with the changing times. We received both provincial and federal funding to change our housing model. We now rent two properties in the Whistler community to use as housing for Work 2 Live participants. Though our search for the perfect house extended into 2021, we managed to create a home for our participants and guarantee safe, stable, healthy housing while they are in the program. We were also able to add overnight staffing, ensuring 24-hour support.

"ZC helped make housing run so smooth, when I hear people couch surfing before actually finding an affordable room. I didn't have any of those challenges, they showed me where to get my keys and to my room. It was very simple. Simple means a lot for people who have lived complicated lives!"

— **Angela M., Work 2 Live Graduate**

"For me, uncertainty could very well describe my experience over the last year. This is a feeling that our participants have long been familiar with. I have repeatedly heard from our participants that goals, whether big or small, weren't even considered because they couldn't see into the future further than where they were going to find their next meal or a place to sleep. To me, I believe the provision of stable, affordable housing provides a foundation on which awareness and personal growth can flourish. Indeed, our participants move beyond just surviving in the present moment and begin looking into the future where they are not only setting goals, but achieving them."

— **Sean E., Co-Executive Director**

"Seeing our crew living in their own house, having their own rooms and space to be comfortable and creative was so amazing. Knowing that they were in a safe and secure housing situation has been huge in terms of the growth we have seen in our participants.

They have opened up and shared so much which has been integral in their confidence in building relationships and trust with staff and other service providers."

— **Laura R., Zero Ceiling Staff**

In 2020 we increased
our capacity from 8
beds per year to 10 by
changing our
housing model

Supportive Employment

2020 saw us working hard to keep all of our participants employed. With the challenges facing local businesses, large and small, we had our work cut out for us. Jobs not only provide income and the chance to gain skills and experience, but can also give a sense of purpose, a social outlet, and help with a stable routine. By the end of the year, we had job placements at several Whistler businesses with more support in place for managers and participants than ever at Whistler Blackcomb, The Fairmont Chateau Whistler, Nita Lake Lodge, and Nesters Market.

"Branching out to employers other than WB allowed us to form strong supportive relationships with more community members. [I]n the participants, I was able to see pride in being able to work in areas they were interested in."

— Laura R., Zero Ceiling Staff

"Over the period of the season so far we as Employers and Rhianna our case worker have been there many times to raise up our ZC Candidate. When we [...] knew they were having a hard time we could reach out to the ZC team to check in with our [employee] to make sure they were okay. This support allowed to know they had a safety net to catch them when they were feeling low and we were able to spring them back up to their feet and we have seen great improvement over the last several months. Not only was our [employee] supported but also I felt as we as managers had someone we could easily reach out to for more support in our more challenging times."

— D., Supportive Employer Manager

"I honestly don't even know where to start.. all I know is that it had a very positive impact in my life especially in 2020. It helped me gain my independence but gave me support at the same time."

— Angelaa M., Work 2 Live Graduate

"From the conversations held with the staff that are part of the Zero Ceiling program, I believe that ZC has offered great support."

— Anonymous Supportive Employer

"During a period where so many people felt they had no direction, our job placements provided purpose and structure."

— Sean E., Co-Executive Director

In 2020 we worked with 5 local businesses and provided 28 hours of training to support their staff to work with youth in our program

Food Security

"These nights provided an opportunity for connection and a place to process the seemingly endless hardships that 2020 threw at us. Family Dinner is our best attended program and the one I personally look forward to every week." — **Sean E., Co-Executive Director**

In 2020 we provided
approximately 468 meals to
participants over weekly
Family Dinners

"Foood! It's such a big part of the culture I grew up in. So it was amazing to get together and learn new recipes and skills in the kitchen. So many fancy veggies I didn't even know existed! The food bank was also a great place to connect with others and I didn't have to worry about not having a meal."

— **Angela M., Work 2 Live Graduate**

"I have seen the crew take notice of what they are eating and how it directly relates to their mental/physical/emotional health. Our work with meal planning has definitely put more focus on the importance of food and nutrition. I notice that sometimes the crew will read the labels on food before making purchases, taking into consideration the nutritional values of items, and a few participants have been doing regular meal planning to include healthy options." — **Laura R., Zero Ceiling Staff**

Land-Based Programming

"Physical activity has always been an outlet in my life since I was a little girl. It helps me with anger and stress, so being able to ride and see progress over a season was honestly one of the best experiences of my life." — **Angela M., Work 2 Live Graduate**

"I have noticed how the crew overcomes so much by spending time outdoors. There has been a lot of relationship building and conflict resolution that happens during the outdoor times."

— **Laura R., Zero Ceiling Staff**

Decolonization in 2020

We recognize that it is an immense privilege to be able to offer land-based programming, when its rightful owners, the Skw̓w̓mesh and Liłwat Nations are excluded from meaningful engagement in and freedoms to care for and use the gifts of the territory they have occupied since time immemorial. In 2020, we began the process of decolonizing our organization so that we can do more to create a more equitable, anti-racist future for Indigenous, Black, and other racialized people. Our staff team has participated in 3 decolonization trainings, have been updating our internal policies and by-laws to incorporate stronger decolonization practices, and are engaging in community conversations around this topic. We are committed to doing better for all who suffer under the current systems of oppression. We are looking forward to continuing this crucial work in 2021 and beyond.

In 2020, 85% of participants consistently accessed formal mental health support (100% accessed some sort of mental health support)

Mental Health Support

"Trauma is a bond that all of our participants share.

Trauma that is the result of discriminatory and exclusionary policy, practice, and legislation that has

seen a disproportionate impact on marginalized communities — the communities our participants come from. We have always been aware of the toll this trauma has on mental health, but we saw it manifest differently in 2020. Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, our participants would be able to manage the impacts of trauma through various coping strategies. Largely though, the individuals we work with would be able to 'put on their mask' so as not to have to confront these painful experiences. The added stress of the pandemic has resulted in an inability to keep a cap on the impacts of this trauma and the toll it has on mental health. With this we have seen a record high number of our participants connected with mental health supports, whether that is VCH Mental Health team or Dan's Legacy. Further to this we have seen more participants access emergency services for mental health concerns this last year than we have in all years before it. The young people we serve have not changed; life has just gotten even harder to cope with. I feel so fortunate that our team and community partners were in a place to provide immediate loving interventions."

— **Sean E., Co-Executive Director**

"Our [Work 2 Live participant staff member] struggled with some mental health issues and over the last several months his overall happiness and attitude has improved. He seems happier, healthier and a more impactful part of the team now. I believe a big key to his improvements is the support he receives from the Zero Ceiling program."

— **D., Supportive Employment Manager**

"I honestly got set up with one of the most amazing counsellors, it's not easy to talk about [some things]. But I got the help I needed thanks to the crew. My favourite thing was one on one time at different cafes!"

— **Angela M., Work 2 Live Graduate**

"Having us advocate and be consistent about connections to mental health resources has normalized seeking support for these things, removed a lot of stigma associated with mental health challenges. We strengthened our connections to people we can refer to for services and familiarized our crew with those folks & organizations."

— **Laura R., Zero Ceiling Staff**



Life Skills

"Surviving isn't the goal of ZC's programs, thriving is! Our Life Skills program is basically a crash course in adulting. We offer session on budgeting, taxes, credit cards, interpersonal communication, consent, and so much more. We adapted to online facilitations when we needed to and moved to smaller more individualized sessions when we went back to face to face facilitation." — **Sean E., Co-Executive Director**

In 2020, 8 participants completed the RentSmart Certificate (with 8 more to complete theirs in 2021)



"Rentsmart: it was so awesome to see the crew learn and apply the knowledge from these sessions. Since we ran that course, 4 of the participants have gone on to independently rent their own units and are empowered to ask the right questions and use the knowledge they have to avoid scams, bad rental agreements, and move towards successful living arrangements. A few of the grads regularly reach out to chat about their renting experiences locally and have been advocating for friends in questionable situations.

Finances: 2020 and the lockdown provided folks with opportunities to save money and pay off some debts. Budgeting is always a challenge but we were able to work through formulating budgets with the crew and identify ways to save.

Conflict resolution: we did so much practice with this and with communication skills.

The crew has, on many occasions, been able to use skills from our sessions to *talk things out* rather than revert to alternative, often more destructive ways of dealing with conflict.

We have seen some strong relationships form in the past year.

Goal setting is important and I think the way ZC sets up smaller goals to accomplish and reach an end goal or long term goal is a great way to help build life skills. Laying things out in a clear direct path to build on." — **Laura R., Zero Ceiling Staff**

"Life skills was awesome for always giving a reality check with yourself, even when you don't want it especially with finances! I learned key little details about renting that I would have not been able to figure out on my own. Having snacks was always nice too."

— **Angelaa M., Work 2 Live Graduate**

Thank You

In 2020, we all learned the importance of a solid safety net. For our life-changing programs, that looks like having a home that gives us safety and comfort. A supportive workplace to give us a sense of purpose and resources. People to listen and give us the space to get help with our mental wellbeing. Good food and the power to make healthy eating choices. Connection to the land and the ability to rejoin nature. And the life skills to not only survive, but to thrive!

None of this could be possible without our supporters and partners: thank you to the many wonderful partners we are lucky to work with. Thank you to our community of volunteers, social services, donors, businesses, youth agencies, landlords, foundations, and individuals who engaged with our programs in 2020. You are OUR safety net! Thank you to the staff team, who worked tirelessly under unimaginable pressure to protect vulnerable youth while also making the last year pretty epic. You are rock stars!

Our biggest thanks go to the young people who trust us to be there for them. You deserve the best and more.

How to Help

If you want to help us end youth homelessness, we want to hear from you! Perhaps you'd like to volunteer, make a monthly donation, organize a fundraiser, or leave a legacy to Zero Ceiling. If so, give us a call at 604.962.5000 or drop us an email at info@zeroceiling.org.

2020 Financial Statements

Revenue

Grants	\$272,420
Government	\$201,664
Events	\$17,941
Donations	\$76,218
Spring Creek Rent	\$14,037
Other	\$31,224

Total Revenue \$613,504

Expenses

Programs	\$59,374
Support Services	\$341,279
Fundraising	\$7,750
Supportive Housing	65,644
Other	\$8,212

Total Expenses \$482,259

Net Revenue \$131,245

We use your funds with care, with a strict focus on strong financial management and efficiently working towards our mission. Full financial statements are available on request.



"I see ZC as a safety net because my life has always been really chaotic. When I finished one housing program, I felt very lost and I honestly didn't know what to do with myself. ZC had my back and helped me reach stability even going through a pandemic... I honestly just want to thank everyone in the ZC family, for not giving up on me and other youth. I wouldn't have been able to get stable and on my feet on my own."

— **Angelaa M., Work 2 Live Graduate**

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