

The Story of CoSA Core Member – Lorne

MRJC'S Circles of Support and Accountability program offers Lorne Much Needed Support

Background: It's easy to dismiss Lorne when you see him for the first time. Short and simply dressed, Lorne is shy and quiet, especially around new people. His hesitancy becomes more understandable when you discover that Lorne is a convicted sex offender who has served multiple sentences for sexual offences against children - all family members.

It would be easy to hate Lorne; he readily admits that the crimes he has committed are heinous and evil. "I pray for my victims every day," Lorne confesses. "I'll remember what I did to them for the rest of my life, and I should." Like many sexual offenders, Lorne is wracked by guilt and remorse. His crimes all took place while he was extremely drunk - something else he shares with many sexual offenders - and maintaining his sobriety is one of his key commitments to ensuring that he never reoffends.

If you asked, Lorne would tell you that his story of offending began at the age of six when he was forcibly taken from his Northern Alberta village and placed in an Indian residential school. Subjected to harsh physical discipline, separated from his family - sometimes for years at a time - and forbidden from speaking his language, Lorne began to lose all sense of who he was. Already horrific, his time at the school became even worse not long after his arrival when an adult supervisor began bringing him to his room at night.

Over the course of nine years, Lorne was serially abused by four adults at the school. All of his abusers were teachers and administrators who secured his silence by threatening to kill his family if he ever disclosed the abuse. Home for brief periods over the summer, Lorne admits that his parents must have known what was happening, "because it had happened to everyone." While Lorne never uses his own abuse to justify his crimes, the connection between them is too clear to ignore.

MRJC's CoSA Team Gets Involved: When he was released from prison two years ago, Lorne was an emotionally destroyed shell. Alvin, one of his first CoSA volunteers, recalls that his pain and guilt were written across his face and showed even in the way he walked. At first, Alvin thought Lorne was so badly hurt that he was beyond help. Fortunately, Alvin persevered and Lorne responded. Lorne's CoSA Circle quickly grew to include several others: men and women who knew of Lorne's crimes but were prepared to look forward to a future that was brighter than his past and free of victims.

Over the two years that Lorne has been part of CoSA he has changed dramatically. While still shy, he now laughs freely and has become a fixture in his community, where he has become known as a passionate musician. Lorne has made incredible efforts to change his life, completing

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well over 16 rehabilitation programs - he loves to show off his many diplomas - and routinely attending alcohol diversion programs. He has stayed sober and is considered to be doing so well that the police and other agencies have begun to use him as a mentor for other newly released offenders. Recently, he was able to take a major step towards recovering from his own abuse when he testified at the Truth & Reconciliation Commission gathering.

Lorne's story is not over. He continues to heal and to work hard to ensure that he never repeats the mistakes of his past. For its part, CoSA continues to walk with him, helping him along the road and celebrating his many accomplishments.

MRJC has invested countless hours to support Lorne in his quest to become a good citizen and to not be a sexual offender ever again.

To find out more about MRJC's CoSA program, please call us at 780.423.0896.