



Nikki Venair, Peer Support Staff, converses with a tenant at Embassy Commons in London.  
(Photo credit: Sam Lingley)

## Moving from homelessness to stable housing: How does trauma affect the mind?



By Julie Ryan,  
Community Engagement Coordinator

We love stories of people finally moving into a new home — especially after years of precarious housing or no housing at all. Imagine the relief of knowing you have a safe, permanent home! However, the transition isn't always as easy as we'd hope. Someone who recently moved into an Indwell program didn't sleep in their new bed for months. Another new tenant, unfamiliar with a quiet environment, ran their television loudly night and day.

Moving from homelessness or unsafe housing into a permanent apartment home can be a challenging transition, leading many individuals to mistakenly assume that people prefer or choose homelessness. Many of our tenants have a history of trauma—in childhood or adolescence, as adults, and/or as part of their experience of homelessness.

We spoke with Dr. Stephanie Dubois, a clinical psychologist with St. Joseph's Health Care in London, about the challenges faced when moving out of homelessness and into stability, and how supportive housing can make this transition more successful.

"When you're experiencing homelessness, the body and the brain are hyper-vigilant in keeping you safe," Dr. Dubois says. "You are in a survival situation."

A safe and permanent home is unfamiliar, and so a person moving into their new Indwell home may find the environment disorienting or anxiety-provoking. Behaviour such as sleeping on a couch instead of a bed or setting up a tent in one's living room can be a way of managing the stress of the change.

*"The continuity of care that tenants receive from staff being on-site and interacting daily can create more trusting relationships."*

"It seems counterintuitive, but if you're used to chaos, you can't trust that this new housing won't be taken away from you," she explains. "You're waiting for the other shoe to drop."

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We've noted that it can take as much as a year, or sometimes longer, for someone to adjust to their new home and to become part of the community we seek to develop within our programs.

Dr. Dubois stresses that **consistency in routine and transparency in relationships can contribute to stability**. The continuity of care that tenants receive from staff being on-site and interacting daily can create more trusting relationships. Offering tenants choices when interacting can also contribute to feelings of empowerment and control.

"There's no choice in trauma," Dr. Dubois notes. "The more voice and choice you can give to someone with a history of trauma, the more likely you are to build trust and a relationship with that person. As soon you have predictability and consistency, your system can begin to calm down so that it can rest and repair, giving you the space you need to heal. Once healing begins, you can begin to work on creating a life of self-identity, purpose, and meaning."

Permanent supportive housing enables opportunities for this transformation from survival to stability and opportunity. We are honoured to walk alongside tenants as they make this journey. □



Thompson Road Apartments - Exterior view (left): Opened to tenants in October 2023, this property includes 43 apartments offering vital tenant support services. Thompson Road Apartments is owned by the City of London and operated by Indwell.

The Station - Interior glimpse (right): Opened to tenants in August 2023, Indwell's latest venture in St. Thomas presents 45 affordable, supportive homes. In partnership with the City of St. Thomas, the ground floor will soon house the St. Thomas firehall. (Photo credit: Industrious photography)

## Tenant Spotlight: Gabrielle

Gabrielle recently moved into Thompson Road Apartments (pictured above). On her move-in day, she was unreachable — a common occurrence for individuals transitioning from homelessness. After several days, she was found with the assistance of London Police at a local shelter, and her community supports helped her in the transfer to her new home. Later, when asked about her transition and her new home, she stated:

"At the time it was so unbelievable that I had a place. It didn't seem real to me. It was so overwhelming and exciting at the same time, and **I just couldn't believe that people were actually thinking of me and looking to find me and help me.** In less than the six weeks that I've been here, I feel like my shell is starting to break. I'm slowly starting to become that person I once was or someone that I can become that is better.

"I feel more motivated to get things done with my life. **It feels good to have a support system and know that these people have my back.** My apartment is a quiet space that is mine where I can feel safe and secure. I don't have to look over my shoulder like I did on the streets. I can sleep with two eyes closed, not just one." □

# Indwell: Myth vs. Fact

Remember the TV show *Mythbusters*? It was a show where the hosts tested out the validity of rumours, myths, and news stories to see if what they proclaimed was actually true. *Mythbusters* was popular for a long time because it addressed our very human curiosity about whether certain things are true. We've all heard things that seem outrageous, out of character, or simply confusing due to a lack of information.

Indwell often receives questions from people seeking information about who we are. Some individuals inquire about specific details they've heard, questioning the accuracy of these representations of our organization and its activities. So, we thought we'd dedicate a section of this newsletter to addressing some of these myths and facts.



## FACT: INDWELL IS BOTH AN AFFORDABLE HOUSING DEVELOPER AND A HEALTH SERVICE PROVIDER.

We often hear people ask if Indwell is a developer or a health service provider. The answer is both — and we're landlords. We build *and* operate supportive housing. All direct support staff ensure tenants receive health care, as well as housing and social supports.



## MYTH: INDWELL BUILDS TRANSITIONAL HOUSING AND/OR SHELTERS.

Indwell builds permanent supportive housing which is different than transitional housing. As experienced housing providers, we offer **homes**, providing high-quality and affordable rental apartments. Our housing model offers a variety of supports amongst our different communities.



## FACT: ANYONE IN NEED OF SUPPORTIVE HOUSING CAN APPLY TO INDWELL.

Indwell's vision is "Hope and Homes for All." We're a Christian charity that builds and operates supportive housing communities for everyone who would benefit from deeply affordable and supportive housing.



## MYTH: INDWELL'S RENT IS DETERMINED BY INDIVIDUAL TENANTS' INCOME.

Indwell's rental fees are determined by supports and services available in their program, *and* are geared to be deeply affordable for people who receive a shelter allowance from the Ontario Disability Support Program.



## MYTH: INDWELL RECEIVES GOVERNMENT FUNDING SO IT IS NOT RELIANT ON DONORS.

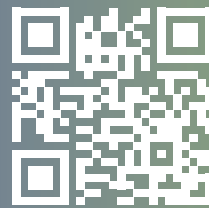
Last year, the majority of Indwell's income came from tenant rent and donations. Our funding model relies on contributions from individuals, community groups, businesses, churches, foundations, as well as grants from all levels of government. We are so grateful for our wonderful donors that make up Indwell's community of care!



SEE [INDWELL.CA/FAQ](https://indwell.ca/faq) FOR MORE ANSWERS TO  
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



Did you know that 2024 marks Indwell's 50th anniversary? We want to celebrate this significant milestone with all of you, so be sure to check [indwell.ca/events](https://indwell.ca/events) and follow us on social media for details about events in your region!



[indwell.ca/events](https://indwell.ca/events)



## 50TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS:

### Simcoe

Thursday, April 11 - Royal Canadian Legion Building

### Hamilton

Thursday, June 6 - Hamilton Convention Centre

### Woodstock

Friday, November 1 - Maranatha Christian Reformed Church

### St. Thomas

Wednesday, May 8 - Caso Station

### London

Wednesday, October 9 - Goodwill Industries Town Hall

### Mississauga, Waterloo Region

Date and location TBD - Stay tuned!

## UPCOMING GRAND OPENINGS:

Cornerstone Suites, Mississauga - Fall 2024

Magnolia Apartments, Kitchener - Early 2025



The first ever Mississauga Hope & Homes Social took place at the Small Arms Inspection Building on September 14, 2023, with over 120 guests in attendance. (Photo credit: Sam Lingley)

Indwell is a Christian charity that has been supporting vulnerable adults for 50 years. We are the fastest growing developer of new supportive affordable housing in Ontario. Indwell's communities support over 1,200 tenants in regions across Southern and Southwestern Ontario—with several projects currently in development.

Indwell empowers tenants through a variety of supports to achieve health and wellness goals, to positively engage with their communities, and to maintain permanent, safe housing. Indwell's programming has proven effective, with 9 out of 10 tenants remaining with Indwell after their first year.

### INDWELL

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**Corporate name:**  
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**Canadian Centre for  
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**Charitable Registration Number**  
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