



## **Marliss Taylor, BScN**

Marliss Taylor, BScN, was the Director of the Streetworks Program and Director of Health Services at Boyle Street Community Services in Edmonton and has worked in Harm Reduction for 3 decades. As a RN, she has worked in adult and pediatric Intensive Care Units in Regina, Edmonton and San Antonio Texas, as well as a nurse practitioner in the communities of Kugluktuk, and Nurse Manager in the community of Gjoa Haven, Nunavut.

In 1995 she returned to Edmonton as the Program Manager of the Streetworks program and has worked in the downtown core for the past 30 years. She was the first to initiate the use of community-based naloxone in Canada in 2005. She created the HER Pregnancy program – an innovative model of care for women who are street involved and who face multiple barriers to having a healthy pregnancy. She has been involved in Health Promotion/Harm Reduction Initiatives in Siberia and Guyana, and a multitude of local, provincial and national research and advocacy projects. She was a member of the Alberta Health Services Board of Directors from 2015-2019, and was a member of the Minister's Opioid Emergency Response Commission for the time of its existence from 2017-2019. She is the past Chair of the Canadian Drug Policy Coalition (2015 – 2024). She retired after 30 years in 2025.

She is now an Adjunct Professor at the School of Public Health at the University of Alberta.



## **Allison (Ally) Thornton, MSW, RSW**

Allison holds a Clinical Masters of Social Work degree and lives in Alberta, Canada. She has been practicing for over two decades in a wide variety of Mental Health roles, from urban to rural, inpatient, community and residential treatment and across the lifespan. A decade of her career was in rural with work in Lethbridge and Medicine Hat. She describes herself as a community informed Clinical Social Worker, as the individual she treats is part of a larger system. Clinically she has training in a wide variety of treatment modalities such as ART, EMDR, Narrative, DBT and Play based or somatic therapies. She believes the treatment needs to be tailored to the client and that it is not a one size fits all approach to what wellness looks like.

Allison currently works as the Mental Health Practice Supervisor at the Alex, acting as a clinical supervisor for the Mental Health Clinicians, Social Workers and Case managers across all of the Alex programs. The Alex Community Health Center is located in Calgary and serves Calgary's marginalized and complex patients for the last fifty years. This includes our Youth Health Center, Seniors Health Center, Street Outreach team, and our RAAM and Community Health Center.



## **Jane Slessor, PhD Candidate, MSW, RSW (She/Her)**

I am an uninvited white settler occupier living in Amiskwaciwâskahikan, on Treaty 6 territory and within Fort Edmonton Otipemisiwak Métis District 9. As a social worker since 2005, I have dedicated most of my career to working and learning alongside individuals experiencing homelessness, with much of this time spent supporting survivors of the Indian Residential School System, their families, and communities.

Currently, I am pursuing a PhD while teaching social work and supporting practicum coordination at the University of Calgary. At my core, I am an anti-oppressive social worker committed to advancing practices that honour Indigenous sovereignty, work towards dismantling systemic inequities, and foster collective healing and justice for all.



**Shay Vanderschaeghe**

Shay (Jennifer) Vanderschaeghe has worked locally, provincially and nationally in harm reduction, drug policy and sexual health. After 32 years, she has a basic grasp of the cultures, motivations and behaviours of people who are houseless, people who use drugs, people who are queer, and people who work in unregulated professions (e.g. sex work).

Shay works as the Red Deer Public Library Community Liaison. Shay is too much warrior and not enough poet. She works everyday to be an ally or accomplice. She volunteers, recycles and would probably punch a nazi. Shay's rural fixer-up includes her 2 dogs, three mousers and unwanted skunks.



**Amber Farrelly, MSW , RSW  
Candidate**

Amber is a Registered Social Worker, Master of Social Work Candidate, Certified Animal Assisted Therapist, and Registered Counselling Therapist. With over 12 years of experience providing trauma-informed care, she has spent much of her career on the front lines in Edmonton's inner city supporting individuals and communities impacted by mental health and addiction. Amber views harm reduction as more than safe supply—she sees it as an essential, integrated approach that affirms dignity, builds connection, and creates pathways to healing.