



**CHARLES
AYOTTE**
Culture and
Engagement
Lead

FROM A MULTICULTURAL PURPOSE TO AN INTERCULTURAL PURPOSE

Charles Ayotte's appointment to the position of Culture and Engagement Lead at Phoenix was not an arbitrary decision. And as the position's title might suggest, diversity and connectivity are primary characteristics in its obligation—enter Charles.

Charles is Cree (based on his mother's lineage), a mature man, with an appearance that is sturdy, yet gentle.

Up until 25 years of age, Charles was strewn in addiction and its consequences, though his essence was unwittingly mentored in a language guiding him towards a 'being-of-service' career. He flashes a broad, friendly smile; "I remember being asked if I'd like to go into counselling. I responded by saying, I don't need counselling!"

In January of 2001, Charles arrived at Phoenix. "At the time the facility was a five-bedroom house. I interviewed for a counsellor's position while sitting on an upside-down bucket in a very small office."

Over the next 18 years, Phoenix evolved into its founders' (Mike and Ann Wilson) vision: a sprawling state-of-the-art facility, meeting the needs of recovering addicts, counsellors, and administration, while utilizing a 'strengths-based' philosophy. However, with the ever-changing landscape of addiction, the demand for intervention beyond these beliefs was the impetus for the Phoenix Society to get creative.

From being a Counsellor, to a Transitional Housing Manager, to the Culture and Engagement Lead, Charles' experience is an invaluable resource; when fused with the positive and

endearing values of his indigenous heritage, Charles' voice is distinct: "I would very much like to lead us from a multicultural to an intercultural purpose, benefiting everyone in need of the service of recovery."

DID YOU KNOW?

There is an Indigenous Sweat Lodge in the rear of one of the Phoenix buildings with an Elder who has offered supports to the residents through Elder counselling and weekly Sweat Lodge ceremonies.

