

# Tamarack magic: 15 years of learning and growing

## Joanne's Story

I first heard about Tamarack early on in my own recovery journey. I would sit in the same 12 step meetings that were attended by participants of Tamarack and they all spoke highly of the Centre. They actually seemed to be enjoying their time in treatment, which seemed unusual, as that had not been my experience going through a different program. Even when I went to visit a close friend who was in treatment at Tamarack, I remember being struck by the home-like environment and the friendly staff. I even wondered if one day I might be able to work in recovery myself.

**“We’re always in a process of looking for how we can grow”**

It wasn't long before I learned of a support staff vacancy and, against my reserved nature, I called and was asked to come down right away for a chat. I literally ran all the way! I shared that, apart from my own recovery from addiction, I had no formal experience in the field and simply wanted the opportunity to get my foot in the door. To my happy surprise, they hired me!

Even though I'd been in recovery for some time I didn't realize there was more to the process than just acquiring 28 days of sobriety and attending 12 step meetings. Once at Tamarack, I saw that my attitude had been a bit limited and I proceeded to soak up all the new information I could, learning about trauma, boundaries and the “how's and why's” of addiction. As I was doing that, I discovered an incredible bonus that I had never experienced in my previous work environments. For the first time in a long time, I was treated as though I was valued, I was even told I was valued and I actually started to feel valued myself. My mind was blown and I was hooked. I became at that point a ‘Tamarack lifer’.

15 years later my ‘lifer status’ is still intact. I have largely stayed because of the things I first saw back in my early days at Tamarack. An inclusive, warm, comfortable and welcoming environment for the participants working to get sobriety and likewise for the people dedicated to helping them achieve that.

We're always in a process of looking for how we can grow and build on what we're doing well, making changes to the program, staff training and even the home, all based on feedback from our team and participants.

I have loved being part of developing our aftercare and pre-treatment programs, and seeing our dream of having a safe transitional home for our graduates become a reality, based on what our participants told us they needed.

We have a very cohesive tightly knit team that's overseen by an Executive Director who goes over and above to lead by example and encourages our growth both personally and professionally. Because she believes in her team and sees our value, I have been able to move through various roles at Tamarack to the position I have now. That's a pretty big thing for someone who, up to that point, never stayed at a job longer than two years!

**“My work here has contributed to my healthy recovery”**

I firmly believe that my work here has contributed to my healthy recovery. I feel honored and blessed to have spent a large part of my days and my working years at Tamarack.

Tamarack seems to have magic, a will and life all its own. I have no doubt that as the next generation of ‘lifers’ and participants take Tamarack through the next 50 years, it will continue to be held in high regard as a place of opportunity for staff and a life saver for participants.