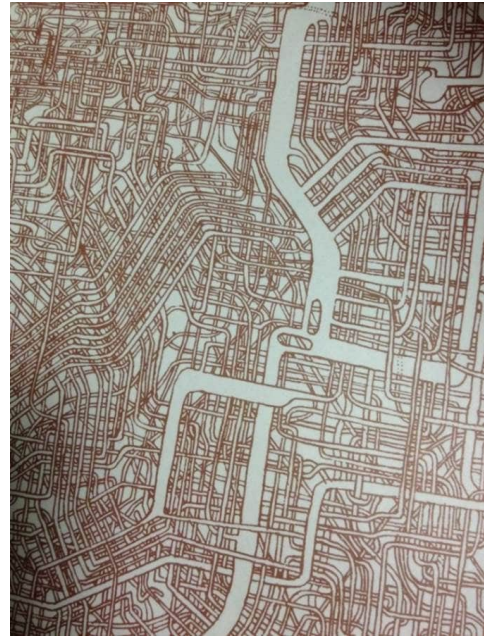


# System Operations & Safety Peer Navigators

(Supporting Women+ experiencing gender-based violence  
to navigate services and supports)

## What is the Challenge?

The housing system in BC is enormous, made up of many smaller organizations and systems that don't always effectively communicate with one another, and is unsurprisingly, difficult to navigate with many moving pieces and many barriers. As a system that is complex and often confusing, these challenges are even more unmanageable for women who are actively in crisis. The process is managed through a "one size fits all" approach, and does not take into account the different needs of people who are trying to access supports. Users aren't always able to access the right knowledge or tools to make it through the process, and therefore enter a system that doesn't often set them up for success.



## What is the Prototype?

This prototype is a specific community role/team developed with women+ and gender diverse folks with lived experiences who will be trained to support women+ at risk or fleeing from violence to navigate and leverage the resources within the system.

The role of the SoS-PN is to support women+ and gender diverse people to access emergency supports, shelter, and safety services and resources; and to identify gaps in services to fill where they can. To do so, they utilise a decolonial, trauma-informed, and brain injury-informed approach to not only be a resource to those seeking support, but to walk alongside them as they navigate available supports and services.

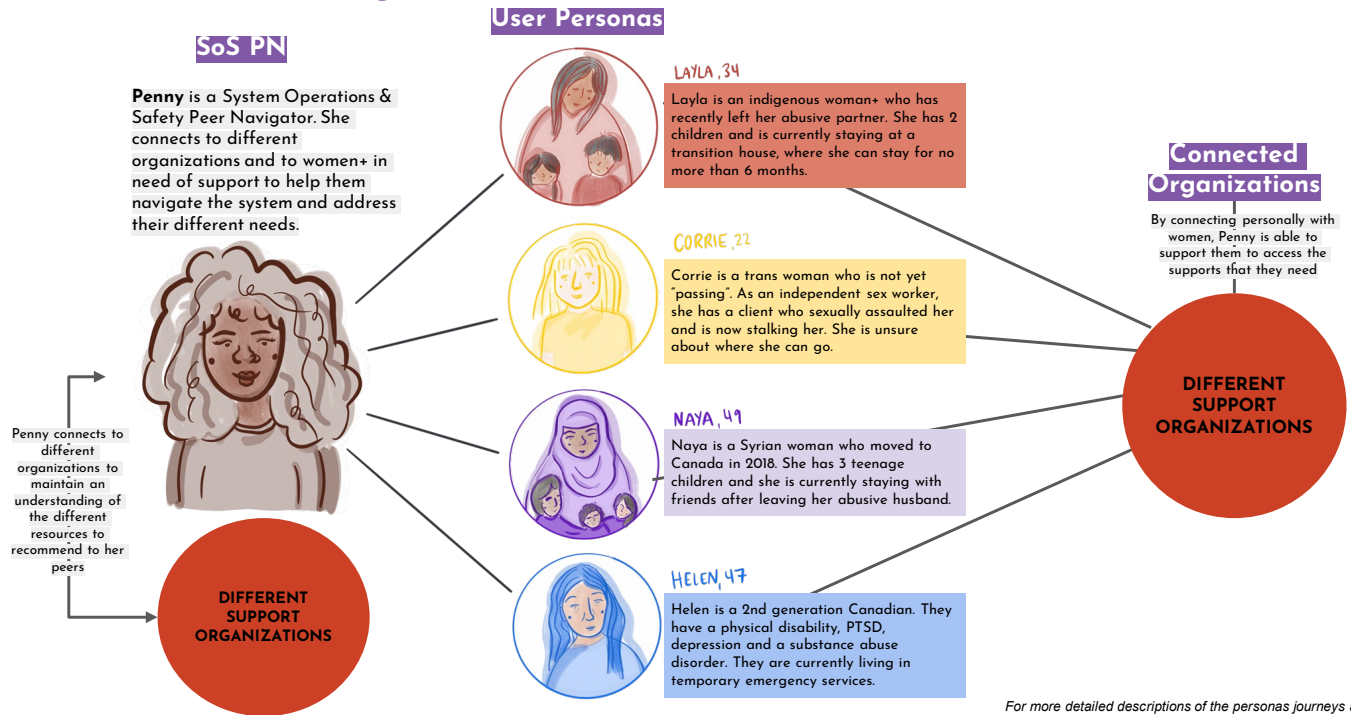
Behind the scenes, the SoS-PN role is also engaged in connecting organisations to "pre-navigate" the system, support inter-organizational cooperation, and uncover better ways to build intersecting infrastructure.



**System Operations & Safety Peer Navigators (SoS PN)**

**Liaison, Advocate, Networker, Broker, Relationship Builder, Resource Database, Crisis Support, Person-Centred Focus, Trauma Informed and Decolonial Approach, etc...**

# Who are the players?



For more detailed descriptions of the personas journeys and how PSSN can support them, please refer to the appendix

## Personas



*Trying to leave abusive partner  
2nd Generation Canadian  
Has Physical disability, PTSD,  
Depression, and Substance use  
disorder  
Current Housing: Temporary  
Emergency Housing*

*Helen sustained multiple brain  
injuries as a result of physical  
assault to the head by their partner  
which makes daily living tasks  
increasingly challenging*

### Hopes

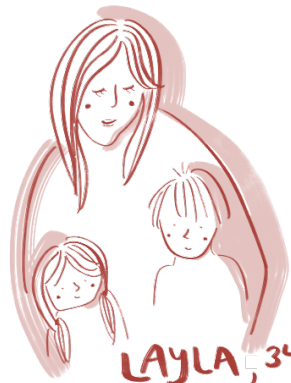
- to find supportive housing ASAP and move towards long term independent housing
- to feel safe, supported, and seen
- to be in a safe, stable environment and have easy access to the supports she needs

### Fears

- That they will have to sleep on the street if they cannot find other housing options

### Barriers

- Untreated depression and PTSD makes it hard to find and keep a job
- Lack of stability and support makes access to necessary supports difficult
- Continues to use substances to cope with stress and insecurity of living in shelters
- Housing/Shelter providers are not referring and Helen is unaware of shelters that allow substances and support gender diverse populations.



*Indigenous woman+ leaving  
abusive partner  
Has 2 children aged 8 & 12  
Current Housing: Transition  
House (6 months or less)*

*Layla suffers from a brain injury  
that she sustained from her  
abusive partner. This injury gives  
her cognitive challenges that  
affect her daily life.*

### Hopes

- To find safe, affordable long-term housing for herself and her kids after leaving an abusive partner

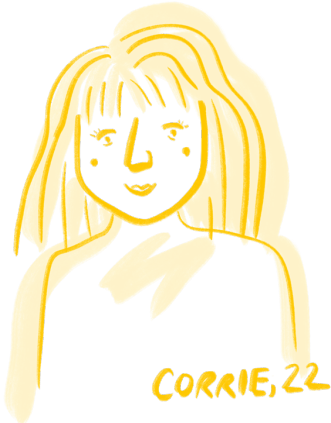
### Fears

- That she'll have to leave the transition house without having housing in place
- that she will lose her children
- that she will have to return to her abusive partner

### Barriers

- 30 day cut-off from transition housing. No space and or long waitlists for second stage housing & family subsidized housing
- Unaffordable rental housing market and she doesn't have the money for a damage deposit because she left quickly
- Currently unemployed and worried about long-term finances and money for rent
- Colonial structures/organizations

# Personas



**CORRIE, 22**

*Trans woman not yet “passing”  
Independent sex worker  
Has a client who has sexually  
assaulted her and is now stalking  
her*

## Hopes

- To be able to keep her apartment

## Fears

- Doesn't want to access the police because of negative past experiences
- Doesn't want to lose her apartment as she doesn't have job references and her landlord leaves her alone

## Barriers

- Stigma around sex work and being a trans woman
- Unsure where is a good fit for her in terms of shelter/transitional housing
- ID is back at the apartment and is in her former/dead name
- Will not be able to work indoors at a shelter/transition home which is her sole source of income



**NAYA, 49**

*From Syria, arrived in  
Canada in 2018, has 3  
children aged 11, 13, and 17  
Current housing:  
staying with friends after  
leaving abusive Husband*

## Hopes

- To become independent and access housing for herself and her children
- To remain close to friends, services, and her children's schools

## Fears

- That her abusive husband will find her and her children
- Reluctant to tell friends' the full story due to stigma associated with intimate partner violence

## Barriers

- Relies on husband financially
- Does not drive and has no means of transportation
- Learning English but struggling to find employment
- Unaware of supports for mental health, survivors of intimate partner violence, and transition houses
- Overwhelmed by ongoing immigration process (she does have her Permanent Residency Card)

# How might this work?



On Mondays, Penny begins her day at the Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness.



There, she meets Helen, whom she has been working with. Helen has a brain injury and has trouble managing her appointments to get into housing. Penny introduces Helen to The Cridge Brain Injury Services to help memory strategies.



In the afternoon, Penny does outreach in the community. Today, she is checking in on a peer that has been staying at the Sandy Merriman Transition House.



Penny meets with Layla there. She's settling in well and she feels ready to talk to someone about her experiences. Penny connects her to the Indigenous Womens Counselling Services.



On Tuesday mornings, Penny sits in at the Inter-Cultural Association of Greater Victoria. Today, she meets Naya, who uses ICA's translations services to communicate her needs, such as finding a transition house, to Penny.



After her meeting, Penny gets a call from Corrie, a peer who is in crisis after an encounter with her stalker.



Penny picks Corrie up and takes her to PEERS. She leaves Corrie with her card so that she can call her later if she needs help navigating the shelter system.



Before the work day ends, Penny goes back to the organization she started at to debrief and decompress with a colleague. They go for a walk to chat about personal and work related issues that have come up in the day.

# Key Learnings, Challenges and Opportunities



## Ups & downs of prototyping

- Prototyping as an approach is both exciting and frustrating!
- Constant need to balance idealism with realism
- While prototyping the ideal scenario, the team imagined one or two SoS-PN versus imagining a whole team of SoS-PN.



## Importance of strong personas

- Participants of the testing session thought that the user personas had life and could see the gaps/challenges and the need for interventions



Would have liked to have more consultation with area experts to build more accurate personas



## Leverage existing projects

- Leveraging existing projects help further the prototype and ground it in reality
- The team is planning to use the peer navigator program from the landlord liaison grant as a case study to create an estimate of how many people an engaged peer can work with over a period of time

# Key Learnings, Challenges and Opportunities



## Time constraints & Capacity

- Non-profits are stretched thin and most people are doing this on top of their existing workload - makes any testing and getting feedback difficult
- Timeline for the prototyping phase was also short - esp when factoring in capacity, the need for flexibility when working with people with lived experiences, COVID, etc.



Opportunity if more time: Better evaluation for need vs. capacity in our current community climate - how many women are in need vs. how many women a SoS-PN can work with at once?



## Interwoven prototypes + Learning from others

Through connecting with other prototype teams...

- Found opportunity to partner with Women+'s Coalition and other SoS prototypes
- Able to see the interwovenness of prototypes and how to prop one another up and weave them together
- Potential for funding opportunities together



## Importance of a multidisciplinary team

- So important to have people of lived experiences on the team but also to provide flexibility for them so that they can feel free to join the process without being overwhelmed.
- Important to have someone who is also engaged in the core team to understand where the overall project is going and is able to think strategically

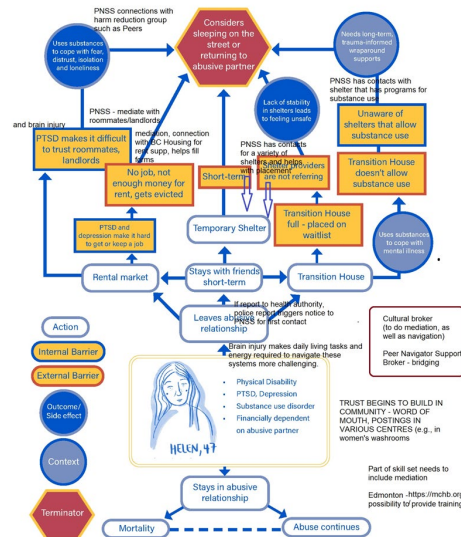
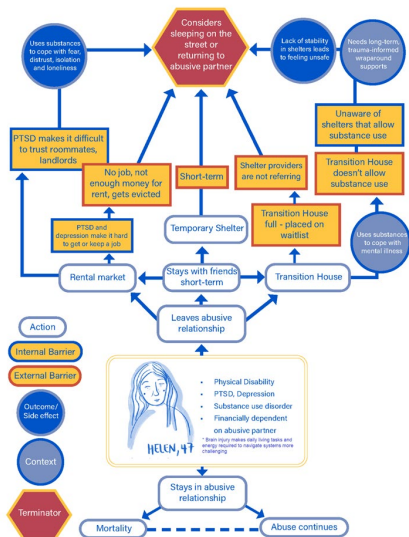
# Key Learnings, Challenges and Opportunities

"Being someone with lived experience who is involved in this project, it provided empowerment and put me in the position to communicate. It is a chance for us to make our voices heard and to make a change."  
- Malinda (team member)

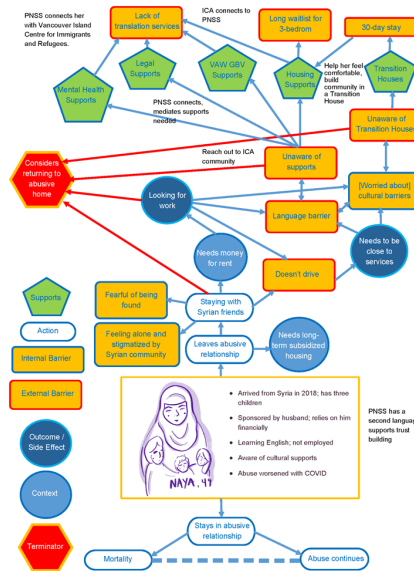
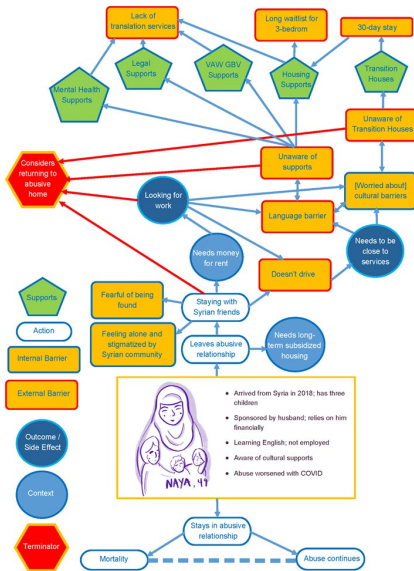
"It's only been a couple of times I've seen this, but you took individuals and brought them to life in the presentation. Just truly astounding...just a huge impact. And it wasn't in a token way. So I just want to commend everybody who was part of that" – Participant

"It's also hard to reach out for help, like that is one of the biggest barriers, especially when you don't feel like you have a voice, or if you've been, don't, you don't matter [...] so you have to enlighten women+ who are fleeing violence that you can put a stop to it and that it's not okay to live that way, but you know, in a way that's positive and empowering" – Participant

## Appendix: Persona Map - Helen



# Appendix: Persona Map - Naya



# Appendix: Persona Map - Corrie

