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connection to others. The solidarity of a group provides the strongest protection against terror and despair, and the strongest antidote to traumatic experience. Trauma isolates; the group re-creates a sense of belonging."

This notion resonates with Red Lodge volunteers, who say this pervasive sense of isolation and hopelessness is exactly what is found among women imprisoned in Oregon.

Looking back on her early experiences with Red Lodge, Jackie said their Native religious services provided a small glimpse of the community they would help her find on the outside. "After my release, I was also able to go out on trips with Red Lodge," she said. "We went to the reservation and we dug roots (for Spring Ceremony). I can't even explain the feeling I had of just being connected - connected to the Earth, connected to the women I could bring this food to. It was just amazing."

"These First Foods are like communion to us," explains Trish Jordan. "With these ceremonies we not only bring the food, we bring the traditional Simnashio Longhouse elders into Coffee Creek, and they perform this sacred ceremony as close as they can to what it would be if they were in the Longhouse. All of our traditional teachings are about how we should be living our lives; they teach us to 'live right'. It's life saving for some of these people that we're serving, because they've lost all hope that their life

could be different."

Planning for this celebration is another opportunity for women in prison to regain a sense of community - for months they weave baskets, craft jewelry and draw pictures to give to the community members who come in for the feast as a show of respect and gratitude. Jordan said many of these visitors are regulars who provide encouragement and wisdom to the inmates. "There's one little grandma who comes all the way from Eugene," she said. "It's against the rules to hug an inmate, but this particular grandma just gives the best hugs. We explained to security it is part of her tradition to hug after ceremony. When we are done for the day, this little grandma is worn out!"

Since finding her community through Red Lodge, Whitt has gone through several therapeutic programs and job trainings, and has also accessed legal services from Julia Yoshimoto of the Oregon Justice Resource Center to reunite with her family.

Yoshimoto said reuniting with family is a powerful motivation for women to get out of

the prison system, and that what Red Lodge provides to these women is a unique service both before and after they are referred to her for legal services. "Red Lodge provides a kind of wrap-around support," she said.

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**- TRISH JORDAN
RED LODGE**

"The legal service doesn't just stand by itself - I can provide the legal assistance that may be difficult for people without money, but folks like Red Lodge provide those other services and support that women really need - especially addressing the

trauma in their life."

Carma Corcoran, a Red Lodge volunteer and mentor for 12 women, said the first week of release is always the most difficult time, and that a successful transition requires a safe and stable physical space where people can land during this period.

For over a year Red Lodge has had its sights on acquiring a house in Clackamas County for just this purpose. The house sits on 2.69 acres with about two acres of old-growth forest and is surrounded by blue heron, deer, rabbits and coyotes, providing a tranquil atmosphere with close access to city resources. Jordan said the house could accommodate beds for about seven women

at a time - women who are essentially homeless and returning to community from jails, prisons and treatment centers. The space could also provide a regular course of culturally focused, gender-specific programming based on a holistic behavioral health model, including cooking and nutrition lessons, anxiety reduction classes, drug treatment services, domestic violence classes, workshops on healthy relationships and parenting, and of course, job training.

Some of that funding finally appears to be arriving. On Dec. 14, Jordan received confirmation that Red Lodge would be receiving a \$150,000 Community Development Block Grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, through Clackamas County - enough to secure their first house and make a substantial down payment.

"This house is everything we've worked for at Red Lodge - it is the Red Lodge," said Trish. "Women need time to heal. This house is about teaching them to strengthen themselves, empower themselves, teach them to reduce their anxiety. Nearly all of the women we work with have a history of trauma, and there's certain things that trigger trauma. Because you do not have other knowledge on how to manage trauma, you end up freezing, or repeating the same kinds of behaviors because you don't know anything different. People don't know what they have not been taught."

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