

## **ANKORS Executive Director's AGM Report**

This has been a year like no other in ANKORS previous history! In March when the public health response began in order to mitigate the risks of COVID 19 in community, ANKORS worked very quickly to re-organize and integrate the new and emerging workplace health protocols. The team worked together to establish how we would continue to offer essential services such as the OPS, OAT, outreach, providing harm reduction supplies and doing health checks. We also established how we could continue to utilize our office spaces within the guidelines for physical distancing, enhanced cleaning and the use of PPE. Some staff members were able to work mostly from home and quickly began to innovate ways that established new on-line service delivery. In spite all of the challenges involved in the last number of months, ANKORS team has responded to these complex situations with compassion, creativity, innovation, ethics and teamwork.

The COVID 19 situation has further complicated and created risk for people who use drugs and this has resulted in increased overdose risk. ANKORS team and our communities have suffered significant losses as a result. The impact is substantial and we all feel it on such a deep level. It is so important at this time and always that we support each other and that we commit to taking action on racism; the decriminalization of drugs; access to safe drug supply; addressing homelessness; gender violence; transphobia and homophobia. We also commit as an organization to taking action and aligning with Black LIVES MATTER and our Indigenous partners and following our partner's leadership on Black and Indigenous rights. We recognize that we are not perfect as individuals or as an organization but we are committed to becoming better informed; more inclusive and more action-oriented in addressing the system violence and structures that create oppression in our world and in our communities.

ANKORS work in our communities has always benefited from the courageous dedicated efforts of staff, board, peer leaders, volunteers and community partnerships. I'd like to acknowledge two individuals that contributed to ANKORS work with heart and soul and who we sadly lost this past year. First I'd like to acknowledge Rose Silvery who volunteered with ANKORS East in providing harm reduction services and who also bravely participated in the Compassion Project that addressed stigma and drug use by telling her own story of her life and resilience. Secondly, I would like to acknowledge Patrick Hermary, a long-time volunteer of ANKORS in Nelson who contributed hundreds of hours doing harm reduction distribution, emptying lock boxes, being our first aid attendant and marshalling AIDS Walk. Both of these amazing individuals will be greatly missed.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge Gary Dalton and Serge Popoff, long time ANKORS staff, both with over 20 years of service who retired this year. Gary Dalton worked as the Community Engagement Coordinator in the Cranbrook office and contributed in incredible ways to advancing the work of HIV support and education in the East Kootenays and in the Province through his involvement with Options for Sexual Health. Serge worked as the Harm Reduction Coordinator for the West Kootenay/Boundary and provided a standard of care and service to those who often experience discrimination and stigma with compassion, dignity and respect. Both Gary and Serge leave big boots to fill and we will miss them greatly as colleagues. We wish them both the best in their retirement.