

2020 AGM Report from Ankors Board of Directors Chair

June 22, 2020

Out of curiosity, I reread the report I wrote for the 2012 AGM to see what has changed and what has remained the same.

We are still in economic and political turmoil – don't think that is ever going to change.

We have a larger and even more dynamic team of dedicated and creative personnel, if that ever could be.

2012 was the year that ANKORS, through the initiative of Fay Carlson, began the overdose prevention training in partnership with Selkirk College Nursing Program. This has progressed well beyond the initial workshops to where it is now more commonplace to find folks carrying naloxone kits with local businesses embracing training their own workforce for overdose prevention.

In 2012, who would have dreamt that Nelson would have an Overdose Prevention Site, provided by ANKORS?

ANKORS was looking in 2012 at developing a new approach to its presence at Shambhala that relies on a set of trained volunteers, rather than staff. That effort has created a significant workforce of specialized volunteers. And now, ANKORS' approach to harm reduction at mass music events is considered cutting-edge internationally.

The development of the FT-IR machines has enabled ANKORS to double-down on detection of the current biggest health risk to substance users – toxic contamination of the street drug supply – that is fueling an epidemic death rate that is larger than the current Covid-19 pandemic death rate.

These are just a few of the comparisons that stood out for me. ANKORS' staff are continuing to bring higher levels of professionalism to the work of harm reduction, from the Support – Recovery Bed program to the development of the Street College handbook for safer Meth use, *The Meth Booklet*; increasing the options of street drug-testing to increase awareness of toxic contamination, and the Overdose Prevention Site with additional health care provisions.

ANKORS is developing new allies as well, as more folks realize how important it is to regard substance use and addiction as a health issue, not a criminal issue. Witness the creation of the Smart Vending machine!

The work ANKORS' staff has done to pivot en pointe to continue to deliver high quality services and programs while adhering to the necessary safety precautions is inspirational.

And now, in 2020, this current pandemic is in some ways an asset at this time, giving ANKORS the opportunity to step back and refocus on what is most vitally important to the pursuit of its mission – to be able to mitigate and eliminate the sources of harm for vulnerable persons at risk of contracting blood-borne pathogens.

This is some of the ongoing work for ANKORS to engage with –

- advocating for provision of a safe drug supply and decriminalization of drugs for personal use
- continuing to increase the capability of providing drug contamination detection
- stabilizing the funding for the OPS
- educating community members that stigma remains one of the hidden killers...

ANKORS is a dynamic organization. It is the people who voluntarily participate in the running of the Society, the service users, the community allies, and ANKORS' staff who implement the policies and continually invent new best practises though their work who keep ANKORS so vital.

Thanks so very much for all your energies and efforts.

Respectfully submitted,

Nora Lilligren

Chairperson