

## **Rise Up Community Engagement AGM Report**

It was a short year for the Community Engagement Project due to unexpected illness. Medical leave was essential and now beginning to start where I left off on December 2019. COVID has played a role in all the work that we do. I am now working to keep myself educated and knowledgeable on present changes based on safety, COVID and staff response for the people we work for.

Earlier in the fiscal 2019/20 the Rise Up Community Engagement Project was focused on working with the Nelson Fentanyl Task Force and the 4 pillars committees: Harm Reduction, Treatment and Continuity of Care, 1<sup>st</sup> Responders and Prevention & Education. I understand now the NTF is based on one committee combined with 4 pillar sub committees as one committee. RUCEP also spent time working with Revelstoke community interested in providing their community with a working group response regarding the use of drugs in their community.

RUCEP also played a key role in the Castlegar Fentanyl Opioid Working Group and the Grandforks Community Action Team. CFOWG and Grandforks CAT decided that they also would work as one committee based on the four pillars. I am eager to come back to the working groups based in Castlegar, Nelson and Grand Forks.

Community Engagement Project has also played a key role with Nelson REDUN and Grandforks REDUN. Amber S. provided most of the support for Nelson REDUN and I spent time with the Grand forks group. The Grand Forks group identified that the name REDUN Rural Empowered Drug Users Network has created more stigma in their community towards drug users and decided to change their name to HOPE "Helping Our People Evolve". Both Peer groups participated with NTF, CFOWG and GFCAT and provided their knowledge and perspectives.

The peer groups in West Kootenay's and BCYADWS all participated in the annual peer campout held in Castlegar at the Kootenay/Columbia confluence. REDUN provided all the amenities needed to bring together approximately 30 people. We had two presentations and spent time fishing, swimming, kayaking, hiking and focus on enjoying ones time within the elements around us.

Ann Livingston from BCYADWS provided a presentation on "What's next on keeping the flow with People who use drugs peer groups". I also provided a presentation on "how to build an emergency shelter." Both presentations went over well with peer groups and people attending. All went well and had fun in the outdoors with little to no problems. This year the campout is cancelled due to COVID 19. We are looking at new ways to bring service users together without increasing risks due to COVID 19 and the ever so present Overdose Crisis.

I look forward to working with community this year and hoping to make positive change with the help of people who use drugs and community at large. Thank you all for the warm welcome back.

Sincerely

Alex Sherstobitoff