

Rise Up AGM report

The bulk of the work this year is participating at Community meetings with Service providers, policy makers, people who use drugs, street involved and community at large. Topics of meetings are evolving and revolving around Overdose crisis, barriers to health care and responses to barriers.

West Kootenay/Boundary region's street entrenched are trying to live with little to no access to affordable housing. Homeless people who use drugs are exposed to stigma every day. Being homeless perpetuates the stigma aimed at street folks. Homelessness feeds off of Stigma or the other way around. Housing is foundational to realizing the determinants of health. I will add that both of these barriers are alive and thriving in our communities of the West Kootenay/Boundary region. Trail and Grand Forks are communities most affected.

Rise Up Community Engagement project is working on an initiative in partnership with Moms stop the Harm, REDUN, ANKORS and Trail City council. We are urging city councils throughout the West Kootenay/Boundary region to lobby the Federal Government to declare the overdose crisis a national crisis and to seek input from people most affected and develop a Pan-Canadian overdose action plan.

I am in Grand Forks once every two weeks trying to support and continue development of the Grand Forks H.O.P.E. group. It has been a challenge to find a peer to facilitate and work with HOPE. The last person hired is having health challenges and has stepped back. Matt a peer from GF has stepped up and has been providing peer services for approximately 2 months. It has been difficult to support the HOPE group at a distance. Matt is learning but eager and willing to move forward with future HOPE initiatives.

Lisa is doing well as the Trail peer coordinator hence the Trail REDUN Group is moving forward on initiatives with City Council, Moms Stop the Harm, Trail OAT clinic and REDUN peers. Her exuberance has helped move Trail City Council into supporting and working with Trail REDUN group on the possibilities of an OPS and/or smoking facility and how council can better support people who are homeless and street involved. Reports of physical abuse from Trail community people against the homeless have only lifted eyebrows with the police. Police have been letting assaults go without charge and only giving a stern warning to perpetrators giving people in Trail free reign to do what they please to our homeless, addicted and street involved. Many of Trail's community are averse to having homeless people in their area and continue to yell profanities at the homeless, physically assaulting people, reports of people blowing off bear bangers and throwing rocks at homeless. Concerned citizens are videoing street people without permission and then posting on Facebook. People take turns poking at the person named and pictured as a societal derelict. This is also an issue in Grand Forks. Stigma reigns high in Trail and Trail REDUN is standing up to this abuse and fighting for our rights.

Nelson REDUN is doing well. I have only been able to participate at Nelson REDUN occasionally. Amber, Holly, Tiffany have taken the reigns and would be better suited for Nelson REDUN updates.

I have not spent much time in Castlegar due to being overwhelmed with work in other communities. However I recently reconnected with Deb McIntosh a former City counselor who has provided support to the Castlegar homeless folks and street entrenched. I've committed to spend more time in Castlegar connecting with local Peers and put into consideration with peers about opening the doors to another Peer group.

The peer coordinators have been supporting Trail & Nelson REDUN and Grand Forks HOPE. The groups are working hard independently and with the help of allies. Peer facilitators with peers are making appropriate and relevant to issues, decisions and changes in their communities. Most notable is the success of the Trail Group allying with Trail City Council and Moms Stop the Harm to move on issues facing people who use drugs and the homeless.

REDUN/HOPE are considering on hosting another campout but only for our local peer groups depending on COVID rules. We are looking at arriving at camp spot on Aug. 13, and returning home on the morning of 16th. We will provide workshops on the 14th and 15th to be determined. We are looking for an appropriate area to host this event.

I'm also a partner of the BC CRISM node The CRISM BC Node is a network of over 100 individuals representing patient, family, and recovery advocacy groups as well as policy makers, health care and service providers, and research scientists affiliated with the BC Centre on Substance Use, the University of British Columbia, and Simon Fraser University among others.

The BC Node seeks to collaborate with provincial health authorities, the Provincial Health Services Authority, the First Nations Health Authority, and the BC Ministry of Health in translating scientific evidence to inform provincial health policy. To ensure that research priorities align with lived experience of those affected by substance use disorders. We've recently launched a brochure I participated on called "(Re) Visualizing the Overdose Crisis: Stories from across Canada by Activists and Lived Experience of Drug Use

With the onset of COVID-19, already existent overdose crises in Canada and the United States have been exacerbated. For almost a decade the drug market in both countries has become increasingly volatile. In 2017, the Canadian Research Initiative in Substance Misuse (CRISM) developed twelve projects to address opioid-related research and program priorities nationally, one being "peer engagement." As a result, the "People with Lived Expertise (PWLE) of Drug Use National Working Group" was developed and has been meeting monthly since 2018.